AIME VAN ROD

BIRCH-TREE VILLA

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BIRCHTREE VILLA

Translated from the French of

AIME VAN ROD

PARIS
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1926

NOTE

This manuscript was received by us through the post. The postmark was illegible. We have contented ourselves with re-reading it and editing it, taking out a few expressions which, from the pen of a woman calling herself young, were crude, and rather strange. And that is all. In all either particulars we present it to the public such as we have received it.

AIME VAN ROD.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction. Miss Evelyn Neakes. Birch Tree Villa. My six companions. Miss Mabel. The Reverend Stephen Grant. Doctor Sharp.

I must humbly beg the reader of this book te let me, first of all, introduce the characters in it, before raising the curtain and letting them struck about upon my stage. Here, as in more ancient litterature, the author, — or rather, the autheress, since the term is new admitted plays her part in the book. In this one it is even the principal one ; and one of suffering, moral and physical, — of bitterness and humiliation. Therefore you must forgive her for being introduced first.

I am still young, not being more than thirty years of age. I am told that I am pretty ; so let us admit that I am, and say no more about it, My dressmaker and my tailor never have any difficulty in fitting me, or in "arangung" me to the best advantage. I make my cloithes. My

clothes do not make *me*... And for the sake of these readers who are lovers of the flesh, especially of the flesh as personified in woman, I will describe myself as of medium height, with chestnut hair, a small mouth a pretty straight nose, and blue eyes.

I have been a widow for the last three years, after having been five years married to a very rich man. Even though the admission may put the reader somewhat against me, I must say that I did not regret my husband very much.

Why am I writing these strange Memoirs? Why, simply because I am bored down in the provinces ; and that my own private reasons prevent me from drowning my boredom in the agitated life of Paris. Then, by the merest chance, having come across a book which treats of the Whip as an important factor in education, —above all, the education of young girls—I thought that I, too, might be able to interest people myself in this strange subject, by telling the story of my own adventures.

I had not intended to do so in the first instance, I was too much ashamed of all the misery and humiliation that I had suffered, as well as far too proud and sensitive to talk about them to anyone in the world. At least, I imagined that to be the case. But I have changed my mind since. I am still sensitive, but not hyper sensitive ; and I am wise now, and no longer

prudish. Philosophy has replaced my pride ; and though I would never, could never, relate my story openly ; yet I am quite willing to relate it anonymously, and under cover of a mask.

At that time, I could count the number of my sufferings, as well as of my pleasures ; though the former outweighed the latter to a great extent. But like all people who bear fortune no malice for her ill favours, the memory of my sorrows is melting away with the years, as snow melts in the springtime, leaving only the beauty of young flowers and their infinite promise...

So, in writing these Memoirs, I have not steeped my pen in hall. I bear those men and women no malice who, for their own satisfaction, formerly made me suffer. I only remember the high kind of good they did me, in introducing me to new and unknewn voluptuousnesses, and powerful yet delicate pleasures.

I am a Frenchwoman. I was sixteen years old, when my mother, a widow, and a very weak-willed woman, married again, taking an English financier, a stout, redfaced man, who I began to loathe almost immediately. At that time I was just finishing my studies, which had not been very brilliant ; and I took such a dislike to my stepfather that I took no pains whatever to hide it : and begged my

mother to allow me to go to England to finish my education.

"Since you want me to know English well", I said. "That is the best way to do so. You must learn the language in the country itself, if you really want to speak it and know it".

"The girl is quite right" said my stepfather. "And I think that it would be a very good thing".

As he said this, he gave a peculiar and rather sinister smile. I was too young to be able to understand it. If only I had been able to do so, my story would have been a very different one. But youth can only judge superficially. So I asked instead :

"Where shall you send me ?"

My mother replied, rather as if she were saying a lesson off by heart :

"At Hertford, North London, we have a friend who is Headmistress of a very good boarding school. The life there is quite a family one, as it is a small private school, of about seven or eight girls. She, Miss Neakes, is very kind and charming ; and I feel sure, will be delighted to take you. So, my dear child, you may expect to go in about a week..."

As she pronounced the last words, my mother's voice broke with emotion. She was sincere, no doubt ; but the influence of my stepfather had done much towards weakening her

affection for myself. Later on, I found out, too, that my mother never knew Miss Neakes at all...

However, a week later I found myself in London, accompanied by a rather sullen maid. So quickly were we driven to Hertford that I hardly had time to see anything of the traffic that reared in my ears, and the huge buildings that flashed past us...

How different and peaceful in comparison was Hertford,— that little town of about seven thousand inhabitants, through which flews a silent, peaceful river. I was delighted with it, and said to myself :

"Here is a place of rost and calm indeed... What a contrast to London and Paris ! I think that I shall be very happy in this charming spot".

Miss Neakes' school was just outside the town ; and the river Lea flewed along at the foot of its garden and lawns. The station omnibus old and ramshackle, greaned under the weight of my luggage. Suddenly it drew up in front of a fine grille of wrought iron, beyond which was a fine long drive. At the end of this drive was a pretty white house. Above the iron grille was written in golden letters :

BIRCH VILLA

I said to the maid whe accompanied me :
« What does that mean ? »

She replied, with a strange half smile, colouring a little as she spoke :

« It means « Villa des Bouleaux », Miss. »

« Ah ! Then there are many birch trees in the garden, I suppose ? »

« Yes, Miss, as you will see. »

I attached no importance to these words, and we got out of the carriage. The porter, a great stout man, with a stolid, expressionless countenance, opened the door, and began to help the driver to take down our luggage. At the same time I perceived, at the end of the drive, two women, who were slowly advancing in our direction. When they were within a few paces of us, the maid whispered to me :

"Miss Neakes".

The lady in question came forward, while the other lady remained behind a little. The maid introduced us ; and the lady said, in the most excellent French :

" Welcome to Birch Villa. I am your Headmistress ; and this lady here is my assistant, Miss Mabel, as you will call her".

Then, each of the ladies taking one of my arms, they led me slowly up to the house.

On the way, as she asked me the usual news regarding the health of my family, etc. I was able to observe her.

I saw before me a woman of about five and thirty years of age, elegantly, though severely

dressed, as became both her profession and her position. She was very tall, and looked strong and athletic ; and her complexion was clear and fair, her hair fair, with a streak or two of grey in it. As for her eyes, their regard was disturbingly penetrating and metallic. She was such a striking-looking woman altogether that one wondered why she had never married.

Miss Mabel, her assistant, as she said, was cast in a somewhat softer mould. She was about my height, and had soft brown hair. As she was rather short-sighted, she carried a gold-mounted pince-nez, which made her look learned, and elder than she really was. She was dressed with extreme and severe simplicity ; and was evidently a good disciplinarian. She was dressed in a long, well-cut black dress ; and it revealed the lines of a very good figure, and a beautiful body, — supple and sinueus. Her walk was rhythmic and graceful, and might have stirred the senses of any man. And it was then that, looking at them both, I understood the reason why Miss Evelyn Neakes had not married. It was because she had met in Miss Mabel, someone who could give her an equal affection and understanding, and the kind of love that she desired.

No one ever knew the surname of Miss Mabel. I, for one, never heard it mentioned. The rather sweet and gentle name of Mabel was al-

ways used ; and it seemed a stange contrast to her cruel and perverse nature. She was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age.

And now that I am describing the school characters, perhaps I had better describe all the others, so that I need not do so any more later on. First of all we will take the inhabitants of the villa, and the house itself.

In the centre of a wide lawn, crossed by a few narrow gravel paths, was a large one-staired house, which dated from the eighteenth century. It contained a kitchen and a cellar in the basement, as well as several other very large cellars, which served for other purposes than these of carrying wine, or storing victuals or fruit. We will visit those later... On the first floor was a reception room, classroom, parlour, Headmistress' room, and dining-room. The library was contained in the parlour.

On the first floor was Miss Mabel's room, a dormitery containing eight beds, Miss Neakes' bed-room. The servants' rooms were at the far end of the dormitory, opening out of it. At the other end were three little rooms with iron bars over the windows. Each one of these had a wooden chair, a wooden bed, and a block of wood for a pillow. These rooms were called, as I learned later, Punishment Rooms, or Chambers of Penitence, and Cells of Correction. Above

all these was a long attic, which ran the length of the whole building.

There were two chambermaids,—one who served the Headmistress only ; and the other who served us. They were young, fresh-looking girls, very sturdy and strong. They never spoke to us unless their work obliged them to, from time to time.

The cook was a huge, strong, brawny woman, with hairs on her upper lip, suggesting that she ought to have been of the male sex. She cooked the most excellent meals, and gave us more than enough to eat ; but she had the most morose character that I have ever met. She never spoke to anyone, and worked without ceasing. Latertton, I knew that there were other things which she could do, besides cooking...

I will describe the porter, who also acted as gardener later,—when the moment comes for me to define his position there fully.

Besides the characters which I have just outlined, there are two others of which I must speak a few words : Doctor Sharp ; and the Rev. Stephen Grant.

The doctor was a man of about fifty, who wore an imperial, and looked like a Frenchman of Napoleon's Grand Army. His medical method was extremely simple, It consisted of the two words, as a maxim : " Bleed and Purge". He might also have added : "Whip".

The clergyman was fat and unctuous. He had a face like dog, into which someone had pricked eyes,—little pig eyes, which never could keep still. He was always making a motion with his hands, as if he were blessing you ; and in every circumstance he did it, as a cook without ideas always serves up the same sauce. He came to Birch Villa every day. Sunday to read prayers in the little chapel situated at the far end of the garden. But he often came during the week also, for he was both priest and pedagogue, and his ideas on education were entirely those of Miss Evelyn Neakes. He was fond of quoting the Bible in support of his theories ; and the following words were often on his lips : " The Rod of the Lord". The Lord shall strike Thee with a Rod" "He smote him". "When the Lord loveth He chasteneth", etc., etc.

At that time I belonged to their religion, I must admit ; but I have changed my religion since...

I had six fallow-pupils. Alice, the younger, was thirteen years old. Jane and Daisy were both fifteen. Maud was sixteen. Ellen was seventeen, about my own age, though a week or two separated us. Finally there was our eldest girl, Victoria, who was a year elder than I was but who did not bear the dignity of her years. She seemed to be deficient and fearful, as if, being the eldest, she was expected to give the good

example : but was not always quite sure what it was. She was as shy as a shy child.

And now that I have described the people who are to become a part of my new life, I will proceed to relate my further adventures.

CHAPTER II

The First Terror. A Sermon from Miss Neakes. Another from Miss Mabel. The Doctor's Visit.

With the Headmistress on one side of me, and her assistant on the other, and followed by the maid who had come with me, I entered the house and was shown into the dining-room, where tea and toast awaited me. There, while I ate and drank, Miss Neakes continued to question me as to my childood, studies, and tastes. I replied in a sprightly but perfectly respectful way to all her enquiries ; though the severe and impassive looks of the two ladies was certainly not a little imposing. My maid was being looked after as well. She was to return to France that very same evening. She did, and I never saw her again.

"I see" said Miss Evelyn, at the end of a few moments, "That you are very young and un-

formed, childish,—I might even say frivolous...

And, since your good parents have confided you to me, it will be necessary for me to steady that wayward little head of yours a little. Now I have received a letter, here it is, which grants me the rights of a mother with regard to you, —all the rights. And I shall therefore exert them, as I do with your fellow-pupils. Read this letter, my child".

I took the letter. It was from my stepfather, and it described me to Miss Evelyn as a very wilful, self-willed little girl, obstinate, and full of faults, and no doubt vices. I had, also, the "true French temperament"... He begged them to correct me and mould me according to the "Good old English methods of correction and training". And he added that with regard to corporal punishment, both he and his wife would approve of any such that Miss Neakes and her assistants should see fit to give.

While I read this letter, my hands shook ; and when I had finished reading it, great tears of humiliation rolled down my cheeks. All the time, too, I felt the cold rays of Miss Neakes' searching glance pierce me to the very narrow.

I rose from my chair, in great distress.

"That man !" I cried, choking with sobs. "That man is a wicked monster. I hate him, and have always done so. He has always made me unhappy".

The ladies, at the words, looked absolutely dunbfounded. And Miss Evelyn said :

"How can you speak like that of your father !"

This time I gave free went to my tears.

"He is not my father !" I cried "My father is dead"...

"Why, the girl is out of her mind, and is most ungrateful !" cried Miss Neakes to her assistant. Then she turned to me, adding : "I regret Françoise, to notice that you are in a very neglected moral state,—a most deplorable state, indeed... And I am afraid that before very long. I shall have to use the liberty which your relatives have allowed me concerning the correction of your character. What do you think, Miss Mabel ?"

"I am absolutely of the same opinion, Miss Neakes".

The two ladies rose. Miss Neakes took my hands in hers, while she said to me :

"Here, my child, you will find a very united family. I am the mother of it,—tender, affectionate, and severe. Miss Mabel is the arm ; and you, the pupils, are all sisters. I am not weak ; and I do my duty like a good mother should, do sparing no punishment when it is necessary. I have studied very deeply and thoroughly the character of children ; and I have evolved an educational system while based on one principle, is my own in detail. I cannot, of

course, expect you to understand that all, now. But when you are older you will understand, and will be grateful to me. In the meantime you are under my charge and that of Miss Mabel, to whom I delegate full power of authority. For I see that you will need more than one person to deal with you. You have a long way to go upon the path of progress ; and there will be much to be done for you... And now I will take you to the bathroom for a wash, to cleanse and refresh you after your long journey. And then, for the time being, you may go to your room".

Then she said, turning to her assistant :

"You are free, Mabel... You can go... I will rejoin you later. What are you going to use ?"

"Cords, and a whip, Miss".

"Has it been prepared properly... And is the girl ready ?"

"Everything has been well prepared, Miss".

"Very good. Then go, dear ; and be firm. Until the blood comes, won't you ?"

"Yes".

Miss Evelyn Neakes then led me away.

What was the meaning of this little conversation, carried on for my benefit in French ? Cords... A rod... Everything in order... Be firm. Until the blood came... What did all this mean ? And my hand, burning after the strange grip of this woman had loosed me... What did

it all mean ; and into what awful place had I been turned ?

Suddenly a thought flashed through my mind. Penitentiary !...

At the very word, a terrible shock made me tremble from head to foot, so that I could hardly stand. I turned so pale that the observant Miss Neakes at once asked me what was the matter with me.

"Oh, Miss !" I stammered, "I am frightened... What are you going to do with me !"

She smiled almost imperceptibly, and replied :

"We are going to turn you into an affectionate, docile, and reasonable girf. For you are not that at present. Perhaps you imagined that the cords and the whip were for you ? Reassure yourself. They are not. For the moment you have nothing to fear, as I never whip without a motive !"

The terrible word Whip seemed to make a cold shiver run up and down my back ; and the cold hand of the Headmistress felt deadly and snakelike. Miss Neakes spoke coldly and evenly, with calm assurance. I began to wonder whether it was all a nightmare or not.

Suddenly she said to me :

" Have you ever been whipped at all, by the way ?"

"No !" I cried indignantly, "And I never shall be, either"

She gave a short laugh.

"You will be, though, Francoise, like all the others, when you deserve it. In a few minutes, Victoria, the eldest of the girls, whose stupidity is without equal in the whole history of girlhood, will experience these very same cords, and the rod, too ; and her tender little posterior will bleed under the blows,—because she has deserved them".

What a terrrible way to speak to a new girl, just arrived from ma foreign country. I cried out at once :

"But I want to go away ! I wont stop here ! Oh, mother... If you only knew..."

The next moment I had received a box on the ear which sent my head swinging from one side to the other. I remained stunned with surprise and pain.

« If you don't be quiet at once » said Miss Neakes, « I will whip you in the corridor,—naked. As true as it is that I have just boxed your ears ! »

I raised my hands to my burning cheeks, trembling, silent with fear My ideas were now in such a state of absolute chaos that I could not think coherently... Miss Neakes suddenly put out her hand.

« Give me your hand, little, rogue, and follow me like a good girl ! »

I obeyed, as if hypnotized ; and we went down

a narrow staircase into the basement, to the bath, which were near the kitchen.

There we perceived the stout cook, who stood regarding us with her hands on her hips, smiling.

« A new one, Kate ! » said Miss Evelyn.

The virago muttered something indistinct, and followed us into the bathroom. She held a big sponge, a piece of soap, and a hand flannel made of rough material. There was a huge bath, a hot water jet, a cold water douche, and a great tub.

Miss Evelyn drow forward a chair for me to put my clothes on. Then she said to me :

« Undress yourself ».

I looked at her, Awkward, and embarrassed.

« Well ? » she questioned. « And must I beat you again ? »

« But, Miss », I stammered, « I cant't undress before anyone... I always take my bath alone ! »

« Silly little girl ! » she exclaimed. « We don't ask you what are your preferences, nor what you have been accustomed to. Obey, and quickly, unless you want to be whipped ».

With clumsy speed I undressed, until I was clad only in my knickers. But at this stage my modesty revolted even more strongly than before ; and I tried to soften Miss Neakes.

But before I could open my mouth a new smack on the face made me see thirty-six stars ; and through the humming in my ears I heard the incisive, cleart-cut, pitiless voice of the Headmistress saying :

" I give you two minutes in which to strip yourself completly naked. If you do not do it in that time, I will whip you. Quick ! "

The bitterest shame that I have ever known, since it was the first that I ever experienced, filled my whole being. But I was also possessed by a sense of impotent rage... And in the time proscribed I was in the same state as Eve was before the Fall.

Then, at an order from Miss Evelyn, I was placed standing up in the tub. Then Kate, the cook turned on a tap ; and a shower of icy cold water fell from the ceiling on to my shoulders. I shivered in all my bones ; but the cold douche did much to calm the fever of my excitement.

Then Kate began to rub me with the sponge. She performed her work hastily ; and no part of my body was safe from her ministrations.

Then she made me get out of the tub, and wiped me, — rubbing me with a very hard towel. And then, as before, the most intimate parts of my body ministered to her zeal.

All this time, Miss Evelyn never took her eyes off me ; and when the operation was over she

approached, me and to my great confusion, tapped my posterior lightly.

" Well, were you not a silly girl ? » she sneared. « And what a fuss to make about nothing ! Don't you feel a thousand times better now ? You will have to do this quite a number of times in the future, remember ; and in circumstances much more painful than these... You see Kate, here ? If you do not give me entire satisfaction during the next few days, I will put you under her orders for a time ; and then you will have something to say, I expect. She has tamed even worse girls than you ! "

She looked at Kate as she spoke ; and the big cook smiled complacently, and murmured some words that I could not understand.

Then I dressed again quickly ; and then Miss Evelyn took my hand and led me away. We mounted to the second floor, where were situated, as I have said, three little "Punishment Cells".

We entered one of them ; and when I found myself in this narrow space, near that wooden bed, and in front of that barred window, I felt sure that I was in a Reformatory ; and that they were hiding that fact from me. I could no help it. I began to cry again.

"I don't like to see my pupils crying without a motive" said Miss Neakes. "You must get out of such a bad habit. Here is your room for the

time being. You will romain here, shut up, for a week. Your meals will be passed to you through the grating that you see here in the door; and you will be left alone with your reflections. You will especially meditate upon the virtues of filial affection, and the submission which a young girl owes to her parents and mistresses. At the end of that time, I will come for you, and you will be presented to your future companions..."

She then went out, and closed and locked the door behind her, leaving me a prey to the most utter despair.

So I was in prison. Why ? What had I done ! And when would it all be over for good ?... Of course I owed all this to my stepfather... (And here I made some reflections which were not very filial !)

But because I was young I was hopeful. I felt that I was not the only one who was suffering inside this awful house. In a week time I would go out, and would see the other girls. Perhaps I would find a freind among them... They could not keep me there if I made a complaint ; and in any case, it would only be for a time, all this. One has to suffer the caprices of one's parents as an evil of youth; but when one has grownup, — then one is free...

As I was just thinking that, the little gratting opened, and in the doorway I saw a young woman in a white cap and apron. It was one of

the maids, bringing me some clothes from my trunk. She held them out to me without a word, and closed the grating again...

I stretched myself upon the wooden bed, and buried my face in the clothes, which were still impregnated with the soft perfumes of my little room at home, next to my mother's, Then I began to cry bitterly until the evening came, and with it my supper, — a very good one, by the way. As it was passed through the grating, an electric lamp in the room ligt suddenly. I began te eat with a good appetite...

A week of solitary confinement passed away thus; and all the sounds I heard were the chirping of the sparraws which perched high up on my window. Sometimes I spoke to myself out loud; but the sound of my own voice in that place frightened me. If I tried to sing, the song ended in a sob. I never heard footsteps in the corridor; and all the noises of the house came to me from afar. Later on I understood the reason for this. It was because everyone at Birch Villa wore soft felt shoes; and the walls were thickand some of them were double, and padded...

When I awoke on the morning of the eighth day, I feld glad to think that the moment of my captivity was at hand.

That morning, true to her word, the door opened, and Miss Evelyn entered.

I had thought matters out, during my captivity ; and I had decided not to show myself to be rebellious, since nothing could be gained that way. It would be much better to lie low, and to pretend ; and make my plans secretly. But I had not counted upon my impulsive temperament, which forced me to be frank and outspoken,—to break discipline, and betray my true thoughts. More than once did I do this ; and it caused me the greatest punishments of my life.

Miss Evelyn advanced towards me, and taking my hands in hers, said :

"My child, I expect that this week of meditation has been of great profit to you. You have had time to reflect ; and if, as I am sure it is, your mind is a clear, true one, you will have seen that submission is the only thing which will enable you to be happy at Birch Villa. Of course, submission by itself is not enough ; you must have love of work, promptness in carrying out any orders that will be given you, humility and affection in your bearing towards your mistresses ; and above all, gratitude for their care of you in correcting you of your faults. But all this will come to you in time, little by little ; and then you will be so much happier that you will not want to change, and be your own self... Tell me, Françoise, have you decided to be submissive and obedient ?"

"Yes, Miss" I replied, lowering my eyes before the piercing directness of her regard.

"And your answer comes straight from your heart,—it is genuine ?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Very good. We will soon put your goodwill to the proof. Meantime I will leave you. You will pass to-day and to-night here ; and this afternoon Miss Mabel will come and see you, and explain the rules of the house to you. After that you will receive the doctor's visit. To morrow you will take your place beside your comrades. Good-bye."

So saying, she leant over me ; and in the most natural manner in the world, gave me a kiss on the mouth.

I remained strangely moved ; for it was the first time in my life that I had been offered such a caress. For a kiss on the mouth is a symbol of carnal possession, and is only exchanged bewteen lovers.

Then Miss Evelyn left me.

In the afternoon Miss Mabel came. Strange to say, although the younger women had never beaten me or threatened me as Miss Neakes had done ; yet it was her presence, of the two women, which caused me the greatest confusion and troubled me the most. Yes, even in spite of the kiss !

What was the reason of this strange fascina-

tion, from which I was never able to escape ? I have often asked myself that question, without ever finding an entirely satisfactory solution of it... Her face was cold and fresty, and her blue eyes shone in it like stars on a night of snow. Her face was cruel, though with all the restraint that goes with refined cruelty. And there was a controlled voluptueusness which was never shown, except... And even then it is never breathed of, so terrible it is. She walked with all the undulating walk of a graceful snake ; and it was fascinating to watch her. Her voice was a curious one. I cannot possibly describe it adequately.

She entered, with more dignity than usual in her carriage. Then, as I rose, she walked up to the bed, sat on the edge of it, and arranged her skirts. Then, pointing to the wall in front of us, she said :

"Kneel down, Françoise."

All my nerves throbbing and vibrating to the sound of that voice, I obeyed her. Then she said to me :

"I have come to tell you, my child, what your duties will be in your new home ; and also, what the penalties will be should you neglect these duties..."

She then read me the long school curriculum, the details of which I now forget, such a long time having elapsed since I heard them.

But the most intersting part I shall never forget. It was written on yellow parchment, in the handwriting of Miss Neakes ; and was a defence of corporal treatment in pedagogy. It was, she maintained, the result of a long experience ; and was sound as regarded a philosophy, and as an educational factor in the broadest sense of the term. She went into the whole matter reasonably and psychologically, so it seemed ; and made of it, or presumed to make of it, an art as well as a science. There was individual treatment, of course ; and there was a special kind of preparation, as well as an after treatment. Nothing was done haphazard, on the spur of the moment, and uncontrolled anger. In fact it was not the usual scholastic flogging. It was a far more subtle thing than that,—developed and improved. Every girl, too, had separate humiliations and trials, according to the nature of her character For example, there was the hand smack ; the six-thonged discipline, for certain offences ; the birch rod tov more heinous offences ; then cords, knotted and unknotted ; then nettles, which leave their stinging memory for days after the punishment. Then the thaws ; and finally the riding-whip, of which only six blows must be given, so deadly is its bite...

Nearly all cases seemed to be ones for the whip ; and I observed with terror, that it would

be impossible for me to pass a single day without deserving some kind of corporal chastisement upon my tender little seat !

Miss Mabel read on and on, her voice seeming to slowly hypnotize me. She emphasied all words which were likely to strike terror into my heart ; and when she laid any undue emphasis upon a word, I almost felt as if the Whip had lached me...

When she had finished reading she signed to me to approach, saying :

"Don't get up ! Stay on your knees. Françoise, and come to me that way !"

I crawled across the room to her on my knees. Then, when I was near her she took my hands in hers, as Miss Neakes had done ; and the contact of that cold skin, through which I could guess that a fierce fire was raging, troubled me strangely...

"How old are you ?" she asked me.

"Sixteen", I replied.

"Sixteen... ?"

"Sixteen, Miss."

She bent down towards me, and her hand began to explore my person.

"You are at that age, child," she said, "When the body is forming ; and as in this life soul is inseparable from the body, so the soul grows and develops with it. Now or never, therefore, is the moment to render this soul supple, and

ready to meet all the exigencies of life. And to meet all the difficulties of life we must be disciplined. If we are that, every emergency, even that of death, will be met by us calmly... I detest French girls in general ; for they are so very frivolous and silly. Here we will make a real English girl of you ; and later you will thank me for it. I have just read you the rules of the house ; and have even condescended to explain our reasons for framing them. No doubt you will not have grasped them all ; but little by little and with experience, you will be able to retain all that I have read to you. Your memory, too, will be refreshed by the punishments given you from time to time...

"And now that you know what to expect, Francoise, you may go. The doctor should be here any moment to examine you... So goodbye for the present !"

She raised me,—or rather, pulled me to my feet with surprising strength. Then she held out her and to me. Stupidly, without reflecting, I took her hand and shook it.

I cannot explain what it was that made me do this. I was accustemed to kissing the hands of my superiors, as all well brought up French girls are. Why, then, could I not have done so in the present instance Perhaps it was because I secretly desired to draw down Miss Mabel's displeasure upon me... Out of curiosity ? Per-

haps ? Or out of a strange, voluptuous longing for her to touch me, and ill-treat me ?

Anyhow, I was soon paid out for my lack of politeness.

In the twinkling of an eye, Miss Mabel had seized me round the waist, bending me under her. My skirts were tossed up over my head. My drawers were torn off with a swift movement of one hand... Then, in the very middle of my posterior, until that time virgin to any touch but my own, fell one smack, two smacks, three smacks, — making my heart jump, my flesh quiver, and my cheeks grew red with shame...

Ther Miss Mabel, preparing to leave me, said very calmly :

" Silly, ignorant little girl ! Don't you know that one does not shake the hand of a mistress, but kisses it !"

And she left me plunged in the deepest confusion, and smarting not a little from the smacks that had been given me. It seemed to me that from this day I would never be able to look anyone in the face. It was as if all persons would be able te read the shame and humiliation I had suffered written there.....

Little by little I grew calmer. I remembered that no one had seen all this save the two mistresses concerned ; and therefore no one else would know about it..... Oh, I would give any-

thing for this not to be discovered... At this juncture an unhealthy kind of curiosity made me look at myself in the glass, to see if I could discover on my own body, any traces of the outrage.....

First of all I made sure that the door was fastened. Then, taking down the little glass which hung on the wall, I placed myself in the most favourable position for examining this part of my body.

Never had I been in such a position before ; and I did not know whether to laugh or to cry at the strangeness of it all..... I had only known by reading that the purpose of man and woman was to procreate life ; and that in order to drive man towards that act, he was given the most powerful instincts, and the necessary instruments to accomplish that end. Otherwise I was in a state of perfect chastity, moral and physical. No sensual thought had ever entered my mind ; and I was therefore in a state of complete virginity.

But whatever may be the state of mind and surrounding circumstances of a virgin's life, there is always an element of sensuality, only awaiting the occasion in order to burst out. It is the fire of the volcane, hidden, — waiting for a puff of wind, for a mere nothing, to come into existence. After that, the total escape, and complete destruction.

And so when, having placed my clothes on a chair, and glanced into the mirror, and perceived those parts of my body at which I usually never glanced, a new, strange sense of shame took possession of me, leaving me almost without strength to stand up... I put back the mirror in its place, put on my clothes again ; and then cast myself upon the bed, full length, burying my face in the bedclothes. And I gave myself up, confusedly and unanalytically, to these strange new thoughts.....

Yes, I had seen them, — the red prints of two hands on that intimate part of my body, — red, angry marks, which seemed to brand me as offenders were branded of old, with red hot irons.....

If only it had been possible, I would have torn my skin off for shame. It was not that I felt any pain. It was that the humiliation was too great, too insufferable for words or for memory.

Suddenly I remembered that Miss Mabel had warned me of the doctor's visit ! I sat up, knowing that he might come in at any moment. How awful it would be if he were to see me in such disorder, my eyes full of tears, my hair and clothes anyhow. Especially as Miss Mabel had warned me to expect a very thorough examination ! Quickly I dipped my towel into the cold water, and copiously bathed the parts.

Then I told myself that he could not possibly see anything, and tell what had happened. Then I washed away the traces of my tears.

I had hardly done so when the key grated in the lock, and the doctor appeared upon the threshold.

He was a severe, dignified-looking man, and looked very imposing as well. He was masjestic and unruffled ; though there was in his face, in spite of all his professional suavity, a hint of something coarse.

Miss Evelyn came with me, and introduced us.

"Here is our good, kind doctor" she said. "He will examine you thoroughly, and overlook you from head to foot, in order that we may discover what are your physical requirements and constitutional weaknesses. Undress !"

"Completely, Miss ?" I asked, already crimson from confusion.

"Why, of course !" cried the doctor. "How can I be thorough with you otherwise ?"

I made haste to obey, afraid that if I did not, I would receive another smack from Miss Neakes, — and in front of him..... Quickly I took of skist and petticoat, then my chemise ; until I stood before the doctor, trembling and with downcast eyes, trembling, and completely naked.....

It is absolutely impossible to me to describe

to anyone the state of my feelings then. If I had felt shame and outraged pride when undressing in front of Miss Evelyn, and Kate, the cook, I felt all this a hundred fold more, now that I was undressing in front of a man... It was even worse when Dr Sharp advanced towards me, and began to tap and feel me as if he were choosing a chicken at the market. His soft grasp filled me with a certain amount of repulsion ; and yet in spite of that, I was distressingly, almost delightfully troubled...., My young breast, round and soft, and my plump, very much developed posterior, were, above all things, the object of his attentions ; and no doubt he was pleased with the result of his insvestigations ; for I heard him murmur more than once .

" Excellent..... A rich nature... And very strong..."

Then he leaned his cheek to my breast, ordering me to breathe deeply ; and my heart and lungs being in a very good state, he said to Miss Evelyn :

"It is astonishing how these French girls' because of their distinction, make one look upon them as delicate in health. And then when one comes to examine them, one sees that they are not weak at all, but much stronger than their more robust-looking English sisters, who seemed to be built of rock and sand !"

He then questioned me at some length concerning my natural functions..... And at last, noticing a little abdominal hardness, he said to the Headmistress :

« Ahm, as regards that, it is the same thing everywhere. Women are all constipated, especially when they are young !"

"But, my dear Doctor, we combat that evil, with our system of discipline," put in Miss Evelyn.

"Yes yes, indeed. It is an excellent system, the whipping of the posterior, and abdominal regions. And then the bathing and injections. And the other ablutions, as punishments more or less humiliating. I approve of all that ; and even advise it in the case of this most charming child, who needs the treatment badly..... When did she come ?"

" A week ago, doctor."

" And she was naughty almost as soon as she came ? I see that she has been punished!"

So all my efforts to hide my shame from him had failed ! I felt as though I should sink through the floor in shame. I coloured up to my ears instead...

"So you have been whipped, Francoise?" demanded Miss Evelyn.

Great tears welled from my eyes and coursed down my cheeks ; and my threat, contracted with anguish, refused to let a word pass. Miss

Evelyn approached me ; and, really, the chance was not to be lest, I being undressed, smacked me across the thighs.

"Answer, girl !" she cried, in an irritated voice.

I half turned towards her, acknowledging, in a feeble voice, that.

I had been "punished."

"Who punished you ?" she demanded.

"Miss Mabel, Miss."

"What had you done ?"

"I had shaken hands with her, instead of kissing her hand... When she held it out to me..."

"That was a piece of impertinence and ignorance, for you are both impertinent and ignorant. And what did your mistress punish you with ?"

Oh, that cross-examination, — in presence of a man... And when I was naked !... Would it never stop ? I could have wished my tormentress dead upon the spot ; and yet I was forced to answer humbly, with lowered voice :

"With... With her hand, Miss."

"How many times ?"

"Three".

"You deserved five and twenty... I will tell Miss Mabel that she has been far too lenient with you !"

Then she said, turning to the doctor :

"So then you think, doctor, that this young girl is strong and healthy and able to endure the discipline of our house, without any detriment to her health ?"

"I am certain of that, my dear Miss Neakes. She will endure it with great profit to herself."

And he addeed,as he pressed my side without my being able to protest in any way :

"She is formed, in those parts, as if she were made for it..."

They both exchanged a secret and strange smile. Then the doctor chucked me under the chin, saying :

"Good-bye for the present, little girl ! I hope that you will be good and obedient ; and that I shall not be called in to look after your posterior when it is very badly beaten !"

I was overwhelmed with shame, confusion, terror and disgut. Again I asked myself into what kind of a house I had got, and with what kind of women I was to live ; but I was afraid of something that I was ignorant of, and only felt its existence...

I went and lay down again upon the bed,drawing over me the two woollen coverings. They were warm and thick ; and I soon forgot my cold misery, and felt myself to be slowly growing warm. Little by little I fell into a half slumber ; and the terrifying events of the day began to fade away. One of them, even, I

dwelt upon, as I fell off to sleep, with a strange kind of pleasure... It was the scene which had passed between Miss Mabel and myself.

For, it is true, I feared this woman ; and yet at the mere thought of her I know that, quite willingly, I would do any mortal thing she wanted. She made all my nerves quiver with a tense longing for something I know not what, and would not analyze...

And then, too, the punishment she had given me was light, and more exciting than painful...

Before I know what I was doing, I was bending my haunches, in the anticipation of something that was very like flagellation... And was certainly delightful !

CHAPTER 3

The Reverend Intervenes. A Glimpse into the Terror-Store. My Cell Neighbour. An Interview which ends Badly.

I was now waiting to leave my cell, and be introduced to my companions, as Miss Neakes had promised. But nothing happened.

Then, when the maid brought me my lunch, she said to me through the grating :

Miss Neakes says that you are to stay here for two days more, because you were rude to Miss Mabel ; and because the punishment she gave you was not sufficient."

I saw that the maid who spoke to me was not my own, but the mistress' maid. Her words troubled me ; and yet, in a way, I was glad that I had not to suffer this further ordeal yet. The unknown evils are always the worst, — to the young and imaginative... I was certainly tired of my long sequestration ; but I did not al-

together relish the thought of beginning the communal life at Birch Villa...

I passed a rather restless night. And the next morning, as soon as I heard footsteps outside in the corridor, my heart beat high with excitement. Happily I was dressed and ready.

I heard voices in the corridor. Good Heavens ! It was the voice of another man in conversation with Miss Neakes !

Then the door opened, and a stout man, dressed in black, and wearing black gaiters, entered. He wore a white stiff cellar, the wrong way on... He wore a strange shaped hat, similar to these worn by Roman Catholic bishops. It was flat and square; and two black tassels dangled from each side of it. Behind him entered Miss Mabel.

"So this is the girl ?" asked the man, pointing to me.

"Yes, Mr Grant" she replied.

Placing his hat upon the bed, he approached me and placed both hands upon my shoulders.

"You are a Protestant, I suppose, little Françoise ?" he asked.

"Yes, Sir."

"A fervent one !"

I glanced at him, at a less : and could not help noticing how his small eyes glittered in his fat face... He explained :

"I mean, do you follow all the rules of our

great Church zealously. Do you pray often ; and are you patient and submissive, as your religion teaches you to be ?"

I stammered :

"Yes, I think so... I hope so, Sir."

"We will soon find out" he said. "I am the Reverend Stephen Grant, and spiritual director of Birch Villa. Your soul will be in my charge therefore ; and I will count you as among the number of my sheep... And you will tell me all,—for we are High Church, and confess— all your little sins,—eh ? Eh ?... All your secret, naughty little thougts. Yes, indeed. So that I may keep you a good girl ! Oh, not as a papist hears them, my child... But you will come to me as to a kind father, and tell me all your little confidences... Each week, little one, I will see you in private... If your conscience is pure, you will receive your reward. If it is not, then you will get,— what you deserve. For if it is necessary, I will employ the same means as your mistresses to break your will. Did not Christ say : "Blessed are the humble ot heart ?"...And now good-bye, little one... For the present !"

He tapped my cheek with a light finger ; and I felt a strange feelling as if a slug had crawled over me... Whatever would happen to me when the two of us were closeted together, I wondered ? I knew, now, that he, too, was a devotee. of the Whip as an educational factor... All these

strange people seemed to be... would he give it to me ? And would I have to-te-to do what Miss Evelyn had made me do ? Oh, how terrible !..: As soon as the clergyman had gone, Miss Mabel signed to me to come with her.

She took me by the hand as if I had been a little child ; and I found this humiliating in the extreme. I was fascinated by her hands, too. And for a long time afterwards the hands of a flagellant became a kind of fetish for me...

We reached the big parlour, which was also the library. Then Miss Mabel lead me to a large case, like a covered book-case. She said to me:

"Do you know what that is, Francoise ? Have you any idea ".

I had not.

"Here are kept all the different instruments with which you will be whipped,—either on the posterior, or somewhere else... Miss Neakes has reproached me for my kindness in giving you such a small punishment, when, instead of kissing my hand respectfully you did that which was the height of rudeness... I see, now that I was wrong ; and so I will no more treat you leniently, as if I were preparing you for a more serious punishment. I myself will give you that serious punishment. Look !".

Terrified, fascinated, I looked, and saw, carefully arranged in a row, lying upon a bed of twigs, a quantity of objects the sinister pur-

pose of which I could not disguise from myself...

There were three old leather slippers, with very thick soles. Some leathern thongs,—large and blask. Half a dosen disciplines, the thongs of which had been half torn away with the force of that punishment. Any mumber of long, thick cords. Two wooden laundry beaters, one oval-shaped and the other square. There were several short-handled whips, dog-whips ; and a long whale, the length of one's arm, and the thickness of a finger. This was studded with steel points... There was also a bundle of steel wires, long and slender, which looked blue at the ends, as if they had been burned in the fire... There were a few more whips ; and then, finally, I perceived a wooden box, lying en top of them all,—an empty cigar box, doubtless. In it were a pair of sugar tongs, the claws of which were the claws of lions. There were also all kinds of pins and needles, queer-shaped, and ordinary.

Naturally enough I at once asked myself what detailed kind of punishment each one of these instruments was for ; and I trembled from head to foot with fear as my imagination found an answer to these questions... Miss Mabel said to me :

" Well ! Have you taken a good look at them".

"Yes, Miss" I stammered.

She bent down over the box, a prey to a strange, quiet, intense emotion... And I saw that once or twice she passed the tip of her rosy little tongue over her thin lips.

"Before you leave Birch Villa, Françoise", she continued. "All these instruments, I feel certain, will be known to you more intimately than they are now... Kiss them respectfully ; for it is from them that you will learn to be the young girl that we are hoping to see you...".

She spoke these words in a voice that trembled with emotion. As for me, I was so terrified by what she had just said to me that I could neither move nor speak...

" What are you waiting for ?" she demanded. "Kiss them as I said, with due respect...".

I saw that, however unusual, however ridiculous it might appear, I must obey,— or begin at once to make the acquaintance of one of those terrible instruments... What could I do ?... So I bent down over the box, the blood singing in my ears, and my heart nearly bursting with shame and humiliation. And I kissed the box.

"And it was about time you did it, too", said my mistress. "I was about to call in the aid of Kate, the cook ! Give me your hand, and let us go back to your cell".

As we were walking down the corridor together, an unexpected sight so startled me that I stopped involuntarily,—until a violent shake from Miss Mabel brought me back to my senses...

Through the open door one of the cells, I could see all that passed within. Two persons were wrestling with each other ; and they were in such a position as to leave little doubt as to what was happening... The greans and means of one of them, too, were enough to confirm my suspicions.

One of them I recognized. It was Miss Evelyn. The other was a young girl of about my own age and height. She was fair-haired, and was crying, soreaming, imploring, and promising to obey Miss Evelyn in all things.

Bending over her, Miss Neakes had trussed up the poor girl's skirts and petticoats, and was whipping her. I could not see the exact position of the victim's body ; but I could tell that the smacks fell upon a naked body, because of the peculiar noise they made.

A violent emotion surged up within me. All my nerves were on edge ; and with one hand pressing on my beating heart, as if to keep it in order, I grasped with the other Miss Mabel's hand, and pressed it hard.

She looked at me, suprised at my emotion. Then she said :

"Let us come nearer, Françoise. It will serve you as an example"

Never, never shall I forget that sight, that I then saw for the first time in my life ! And never shall I forget, either, the strange feelings that it stirred up within me...

The girl's seat bounded and quivered with every blow, and like a jelly, shook from side to side. At the same time, a vivid colouring spread slowly to every part that was touched, begining at the softest fold of skin.

Then I looked at the face of the woman who wielded the whip.

She was very pale, and her lips were drown together in a thin line. Her nostrils were slightly dilated ; and the blood seemed as if it were drawn away from her face from the time being. The eyes held a most extraordinary brilliancy ; and the bosom throbbed with emotion, under the neat row of fine lace that covered it. Her arm was raised to its full height ; and rose and fell in rhythmic cadence.

"There ! There ! There !" cried Miss Neakes. "Now will you go in with all your good will ? Will you ? Will you ? Will you ? Try to resist me again ! Try it ! Will you go in ? Flic ! Flac Clic ! Clac ! Smic ! Smac !"

And the young girl twisted under the arm of the flagellant ; and tried to free her legs from

the strong thighs of the other woman, which were gripping her as in a vice.

"Yes ! Yes !... Dear Miss Neakes !... No ! No ! I will never do it again. Yes... Yes, I will go in... I will do as I am told... I swear it.

As if not yet convinced of the girl's moral stability. Miss Neakes made no reply, and continued to whip the victim in the same tender spot... Miss Mabel, at my side, trembled with repressed excitement...

It was a very strange thing, but my feeling of sympathy for this woman, in spite of her cruelty, and my fear and abherrence of the school, only increased, rather than anything else. Could not explain this queer feeling at all. All that know was that I feared her, and trembled at her very foetsteps ; and yet I longed to throw myself at her feet, and kiss them tenderly and humbly. If I was to be whipped, then let it be by her. If I was to have my modesty exposed, then let it be to her. If I was to be hurt and humiliated, then she must do it.

Miss Mabel, however, did not stay with me very long ; but before going away she took me me in her arms, and pressed me to her breast very softly. Then she said, though still in that same severe manner :

"I hope that what you have just seen, Françoise, will inspire you as a good example

should, and teach you to be a good girl. I feel sure that you would be very much ashamed if you were to be whipped on your naked posterior, as that naughty Maud has just done ! Would you not ?"

I felt as if I were nearly fainting ; and yet, how good it was to lie there, in that embrace !

I murmured tenderly, ardently :

"Oh, yes... Dear Miss Mabel..."

The mistress' eyes lit up with a gleam of satisfaction. No doubt she saw by the state of my emotion that I was ready to abandon to her the whole of my sensitive little personality ; and that the battle would be won with more ease than she had at first anticipated .. She said nothing, however ; but slowly she leaned her face down to mine, and her lips fastened on my mouth, slightly parted...

It was so sweet that it sent my senses reeling. After that I knew, as one knows in a semi-conscious state that which is passing consciously, that Miss Mabel carried me up to my bed, placed me upon it, and retired. The noise of the key grating in the lock recalled me to the reality of things.

Absence may make the heart grow fonder,— or it may not. In my case, it did not ; for no sooner had Miss Mabel left me than I forgot all about her ; and only thought of Miss Neakes, and of the scene I had witnessed when she had

been whipping Maud (that was the name of the poor victim).

The girl's cell was separated from my own by a wooden partition. I put my ear to it, trying to find out if she was there, and what had happened.

I was rewarded by hearing the irritated voice of Miss Neakes, and a few more smacks and moans.

So it was not all over. even yet !... I made this reflection with a sinking heart.

But my girlish curiosity and excitement proved, in the end, to be my undoing ; and I won my knowledge at a very high price.

Straying across the wall to the floor, my glance suddenly rested upon a tiny hole in the wooden partition. I went over to it, and putting out my hand, felt the air come rushing through... I determined to lie down on the floor, alongside the partition, and look through the whole.

I did so,—to my utter stupefaction, when I beheld what was happening. My heart beat high with excitement as I was able to make out Miss Neakes' skirts, and Maud's legs. Both of them were standing in the middle of the cell, in the very place where Miss Mabel and I had seen them the first time. And so that her movements might be more free, no doubt, the headmistress had trussed up her skirts, fastening

them back with safety pins. I could thus see a great deal of her legs, and noted that they were plump, and prettily shaped. She had a pair of very elegant long boots on, with high, hunting heels ; and she wore fine white stockings which were almost transparent, the rosy hue of the skin showing through them. Then I perceived the lace of a pair of drawers.

As she held Maud under her arm, bent, I caught sight of the girl's face. Her little hands were clutching Miss Neakes' skirt, the veins swelling out with the intensity of the effort put out.

She was a pretty girl, with a fresh complexion, and delicate features. She had a red rosebud mouth ; pouting and dainty, and somewhat disdainful. It was a mouth made for kisses ; though now it drooped at the corners. For the girl was crying, and her delicate nostrils quivered like dancing butterflies' wings. Her hair streamed over her shoulders, like a mesh of shining gold ; and her cheeks were flushed crimson, as if Miss Neakes had given her many smacks upon them, (which, no doubt, she had, as the giving of smacks was her greatest generosity). Yet what made the girl look prettier and more appeling than anything else was the rhymthic way in which her face contracted, each time that a clear, crisp smack upon her thighs was heard... Was this the

same punishment she was having ? Or was it a new one ? Miss Evelyn evidently seemed exceedingly angry... Yet, if it was the same punishment, as before, what a long time it it had lasted !

Miss Noakes scolded ceaselssly, whipping all the time ; and Maud was submissive, and ready to do anything on earth that was told her. She wept, moaned, and almost howled for pardon.

"So you thought that it was all over, did you Maud ?" asked the indefatigable flagellante. "You thought"—smack—"that I had done with you ?" Smack ! Smack ! "you though that I would let you off so lightly ?" —Smack ! Smack ! Smack ! Smack ! "You ought to have known me better, by now !"

"Oh !... Oh !... Dear Miss Neakes !... I didn't think that !... Please forgive me... Oh, Miss Evelyn, I beg your pardon !"

"You will"—Smack ! Smack !—"never go against my orders any more ?"

"No ! No !... Dear Miss Evelyn, I promise you that I will never... I will say anything that you want me to... everything... Pardon !... Ah ! Ah ! Ah !... Oh, let me off now !... Dear Miss Evelyn... My—my—it is so hot behind !... It is burning me... swear that—".

"How dare you—" Smack ! Smack !—"be so profane, girl ! You must never swear. This"—

Smack ! Smack ! "will teach you to remember. Do you hear me ?"

"Yes... yes... Dear Miss Evelyn, I promise... Please forgive me... I sw—I mean, I will never..."

"I must whip you, Maud, until my arm falls to my side, powerless from exhaustion. Unless I do that—" Smack ! Smach ! Smack ! Smack ! —"You will always be the naughtiest of all the girls that I have under my care". Smack ! Smack ! Smack ! Smack !

And for some few minutes afterwards, tirelessly, it seemed to me, the strong, severe, muscular hand of the mistress, white as that of a lady abbess, fell upon the flesh which I could not see, but which I guessed, after what I had seen in the corridor, to be very much inflamed. Maud's tears, prayers and groans seemed to encourage Miss Neakes, as if the ebbing vitality of the girl gave her renewed strength.

So curious and excited was I that I felt no fatigue from my rather inconvenient position. A strange new ardour burned in my veins ; and a need of some emotional outlet made me rub my limbs together, and stretch them out against the cold floor. Mentally, I was calling for Miss Mabel. Ah, how I longed for her now !... And yet, what would she have done to me, or I to her, had we been together ? I did not know. For the life of me, I would have been unable

to give any precise definition of my feelings. All I know is that I wanted her there, near to me. I would have rubbed myself against her as a cat does against its mistres... kissed her softly and from excess of tenderness, would doubtless have bitten into the palms of her hands... And then we would both of us have matched Miss Noekes whipping Maud... And then, even if she had whipped me, I would have done nothing to avert such a proceeding !

And so I watched and listened, in a state of fever, my throat dry, and my heart throbbing wildly.

But even the most passionate pleasures — including that of flagellation,—have to stop. And so Miss Neakes, giving Maud a last blow, which seemed to contain all her remaining strength, drew the girl to her feet sobbing. Then she pushed her back against the wall,—the wall against which I was leaning, on the other side— and placing a wooden chair there, said :

" Kneel down, Maud, and meditate... Not that your punishment is complete, even now... But my arms, and your thighs, have had enough for the moment. So you will kneel like that, as you are, with those parts which bear the marks of pu ishment, exposed. You will kneel in that position for an hour,—or at least until my return. For I will return. To complete your punishment, with—the Rod !"

" Oh, Miss Neakes !... Dear Miss Neakes !... Don't do that ! Oh, please don't do that... Forgive me... And you will see how good I shall be in future !"

"I should hope so, indeed ! In any case. If you don't, whether I let you off or not, so much the worse for you. You must obey me and trust me. And you must love me, too. I exact it. For I am the affectionate spiritual mother and guide of all those who trust to my care their bodies and souls, in absolute confidence... You have not done that, and so I have whipped you, as I whip all those who refuse me complete corporal and spiritual submission. In a few minutes' time you will have another test. And move if you dare !"

"I will not move, dear Miss Evelyn..."

How Timid and submissive that pretty little voice was ! And full of sobs and tears ! Surely even a tiger-hearted man would have been moved at the sight of them. Was Miss Evelyn, then, harder hearted still ? Was such a thing possible ?...

The Headmistress remained standing behind Maud, for a few minutes. She hid the girl from my sight ; and I could only guess that she was looking very hard at something. Then she went out, locking and double-locking the door behind her.

Then I saw.

Kneeling upon a chair, with her back to me, and her head buried in her clasped hands, whilst her shoulders were shaking with sobs, Maud exposed to my view the whole of her posterior, through the disorder of her clothes. I could see, therefore, a body which had just been flagellated.

I do not know, never having studied the esthetic side of feminine beauty, exactly why a certain part of it has such an attraction and fascination. Certainly the posterior is intimate ; but then, every part of a chaste woman is intimate. And yet I must confess that the sight of Maud in that position troubled and stirred me much more than the incomplete vision of her that I had had in the corridor. It was plump and firm, yet soft and satin-like. It was the colour of a ripe tomato, and parts of it were striped with darker lines, the meaning of which was then obscure to me. I have since learnt, however, that when a thorough flagellation is inflicted, the trace of past chastisements re-appears, —that is, if those past punishments were inflicted by the sterner instruments, which break the skin...

Strange to say, I felt little pity for Maud. Yet I took a fancy to her because of her face, and because... must I say it ?... of what I had just seen. I felt myself to be hard-hearted, and reproached myself accordingly ; but I couldn't

help it. I felt no pity. If anyone had said to me, before whipping the girl : « Her punishment depends upon you, shall she be whipped or not ?"—I would have replied unhesitatingly, driven by some inward, possessing demon :

"She must be whipped !"

I am not, and have never been, hard-hearted by nature, and if any other punishment had been proposed to Maud, light or small, I should have suffered through my tender-heartedness, and begged them to let her off. I cannot even bear to see an animal in pain,—it nearly breaks my heart... No, it is the fascination of one thing which changes me into a different being,—or rather, brings out an entirely different side of me : The fascination of the whip...

After having gazed through the hole for several seconds, and seeing that the coast was clear, I whispered, goaded on by my irresistible curiosity, in a low voice :

"Maud !"...

The young girl starded violently, and turned her crimson, tear-stained face towards me

I then said, in low, hurried tones :

"Maud !... I am here"

Then she rose, and came towards the partition, moving upon tip-toe. Reaching the hole, she knelt down, and whispered back :

"Who is there ?"

"Françoise".

"What ! The new girl ?"

"Yes"

"Who told you about this hole ?"

"No one, I found it out all by myself"

She heaved a big sigh, and there was a pause, during which we took stock of each other. Then she said :

"Why are you here ?"

"I don't know", I replied. "I've done nothing wrong"

"How long have you been shut up here ?"

"It is the ninth day to-day. I am to go out to-morrow"

She was silent for a moment. Then she said, in that timid, coaxing voice whe had used when addressing Miss Neakes :

"So you saw... all that happened ?"

"Yes,—and heard !..."

She had turned purple with confusion, and so had I.

"Good gracious !" she cried. "And you will have to go through all that, too ! They are severe, in this dreadful place... Still, I much prefer Miss Evelyn to Miss Mabel, who is absolutely horrible and hateful !"

"But I shouldn't have thought."

"No, of course not. She gets a hold on all the new ones. She fascinates them as a snake does a bird. But you wait. When you know her better you will see that she punishes madly and

unscrupulously, for sheer love of the thing, and all that it means... Miss Neakes is much the same way inclined,—in fact, all of them are that, here ; but Miss Mabel is far worse than all of them. She thinks of and invents such awful things... For she gloats over our shame. She must have as ashamed !"

She seemed to reflect a few moments, and then continued :

"But, as I said before, you will soon find all that out for yourself. You are French aren't you ?"

"Yes"

"We must be friends, then, and call each other by our Christian names"

"I would love that !"

"Can you speak English ?"

"No. I came here to learn it".

Maud began to laugh.

"You will learn more about something else, here ! Besides, we are always made to speak French, so you won't feel much of an exile. Miss Rod, though, is certain to improve your English".

"Miss Rod ? Another mistress ?"

She laughed again, and said :

"You are a funny girl ! Why, I am speaking of *Madame la verge !*... Good Heavens ! Suppose she should come back, and find us like this !"

"Oh, but we would hear her coming", I said.

"Tell me... Did she hurt you very much ?"

Maud flushed again, and murmured :

"It always hurts... But that is nothing, compared to what is in store for me".

"The Rod ?"

"Yes, it is just as if... one's skin were being flayed off !... How lucky you are not to have had it yet... Have you ever been whipped ?"

"Never".

"Well, you will be soon. Meanwhile, touch my finger, (since we can't shake hands here) and let us be friends".

We did so. Then I said, rather abruptly :

"I suppose I ought not to ask... But I do want to know why she gave you such a very terrible punishment".

"Oh, that wasn't terrible at all. It was just an ordinary one. The really dreadful punishments are only given to us in the parlour".

I thought of the case of instruments which I had seen there,—and shuddered. She continued :

"I will really explain it all later. But we daren't continue talking now, for...".

She had no time to say a word more. The key grated in the lock, and the door opened.

Maud had sprung to her feet and jumped on to her chair ; but it was too late. Miss Neakes had perceived the action at once, in the twinkling of an eye. None of her pupils could ever hope to deceive her.

More dead than alive, I crept away from the wooden partition. But not before I had hear Mis Evelyn say, in a voice charged with the most cutting sarcasm :

"Well, upon my word ! And what were you doing, pray ?".

"Miss Evelyn... I... I just got up..."

"So I see. But that is not an explanation... My child, you must tell me the whole truth, you know ! If you do that, I will let you off with the triple whipping only ; but if not, then you knew what to expect... Come ! Do not forget that I am your good, kind mistress".

I heard Maud break out into sobs again. After that I heard nothing but an indistinct murmur.

I went and sat down on my bed again, bathed in a cold perspiration. Instinctively I placed my hands on my skirt, and felt the warm flesh, hot and throbbing. No doubt Maud's was just the same, now ; for the whipping had begun once more, and the girl had renewed her cries.

For more than a quarter of an hour they continued, piercing my heart as the repeated blows of a dagger might have done. Then there was a deep silence. And then the cries broke out again ; but were more stifled. They were almost like the death-rattle in the throat of someone dying... As I heard them, sheer terror seized me, dri-

ving out every other feeling, even that of curiosity or sensuality. I shed tears of pity ; and experienced that "sick" feeling in the pit of the stomach which comes from extreme nervous and emotional tension.

These last cries ceased after about five or six minutes' duration. Then there was another silence.

What was happening ? I imagined the most horrible things... Was Miss Evelyn going to kill Maud ?... Had she already done so ? No, no. Such a thing was impossible !

It was. For Maud broke out screaming again. And again it was that long silence...

Somewhat reassured, I put my ear against the wall ; and could make out the calm, cold voice of Miss Evelyn. No doubt she was putting questions ; for another and a weaker voice, drowned in tears, and broken with dull sobs, replied.

In the end, I heard nothing more at all.

I would have given anything to have been able to go to the hole again, and call back Maud. Strange suspicions, and a terrible curiosity prompted me... But I was afraid, and dared not...

CHAPTER IV

The Result of my Interview with Maud. I make the acquaintance of "Miss Rod". Shame and despair.

What had happened in the little cell next to mine ?

I knew from the prolonged silence that Maud must be alone.

And then the truth flashed upon me. There had been three sets of cries, with a long pause between them. What else could that have but the "triple whipping" I had heard Miss Neakes refer to when she had said to Maud : "If you will confess everything, I will let you off with the "triple whipping"... Since she had had that, then, Maud must have confessed everything that had passed between us !...

I shivered as if a ghostly hand had touched me. Oh, what a life it was to be ! What a continual nightmare !...

I must give in. There seemed nothing else to be done. I would give in so utterly that they would not be able to punish me at all! ... Provided, of course, that Maud had not told about our escapade. But surely she would not do that ! No doubt she would invent some excuse, màke up a story...

I was just calculating my chances of escaping punishment, when the door opened ; and Miss Neakes entered, followed by Miss Evelyn.

Closing the door behind them they put two packages down upon the bed, and then signed to me to approach. Their faces were rigid with an implacable severity. As for myself, I was as pale as death.

"What is the matter with you, Françoise ?" asked Miss Evelyn. "It is strange how ill at ease you seem ! Why, you can hardly stay !"

I lowered my eyes timidly, and murmured :

"Nothing is the matter with me, dear Miss Evelyn... Nothing..."

"I am afraid that you are hiding something from me Françoise", she continued. "Perhaps you are tired of standing up so long ! Did you not lie down ?"

"N... No. dear Miss Evelyn...".

"Indeed !.., Not even on the floor ?...

I thought that I was going to faint with terror. Did she know ?

I fell on my knees, with clasped hands, and burst out sobbing.

"Pardon ! Dear Miss Neakes..." I stammered through my tears. "I didn't know that I was doing wrong... Please forgive me !".

"Come ! Come ! what a state you are in ! Just because I asked you if you had been lying down on the floor !... Show us how you were lying !".

A glimmer of hope lit up my heart. Perhaps she did not know the hole...

I lay down where I was, and stretched myself out, one arm under my head ; and my eyes fixed imploringly upon the two mistresses.

"Really..." said Miss Neakes. "What a strange place to lie down in !... Why didn't you lie against the wooden partition, at least !... Here, for example".

And she pointed to the very spot where the hole was !...

That was enough. I fell on my knees again before her, clinging to her. I clutched her legs in my grasp, and kissed the hem of her skirt, bathing it with my teard. I was sobbing out :

"Forgive me ! Forgive me, dear Miss Evelyn ! Oh, dear Miss Evelyn ! I didn't know ! I looked... But I am so sorry that I did... so sorry... I will never do it again .. Never... I will obey you in everything... Always... Always".

"Enough of this play-acting, Françoise !" cried Miss Evelyn. "Get up !".

I obeyed, desperate, and trembling from head to foot. And I covered my face in my hands.

"You have", she went on, "made use of improper means in order to speak, without our permission, to the girl in the next cell. This is a very grave error, my child... And worse than that, you tried to hide it from me. You were insolent enough to lie, act, and cheat. No doubt you thought that you were very clever... All these things show that you need a salutary and humiliating correction... Now if you had been here for only a month, even, you would have to go to the Black Room, for a fortnight ; and there you would be whipped morning, noon, and evening, and twice a week you would be whipped until the blood came. There would be, as extras, other small penances and punishments, also... But as you are new among us, I desire to show you my clemency Therefore you will only receive, this time, the same punishment as your accomplice, Maud. The triple whipping".

"Miss Evelyn !... Dear Miss Evelyn !..." I cried, mad with terror and despair. "I shall die, if you do that to me ! Oh, not that... Be kind to me... kinder than you have ever been... Forgive me !... .

And I dragged myself along the ground at her feet, almost out of my mind.

She placed her cool hand upon my forehead. Taking this to be a caress ; I grew slightly calmer.

"Be quiet, Françoise ! " she said. "You don't know what the Black Room is like ! It is cold and dark there. You would only have water to drink, and dry bread to eat ; and three times a day, for a fortnight, you would be whipped naked, on your posterior. Refleet, child. I swear to you that if you do not at once show the most absolute submission, I will send you there. And even that will not spare you the triple whipping, which you would have as soon as you got there !"

I saw, with a sense of icy terror, that there was nothing to be done but to submit to the triple flagellation at once, and to say nothing in defence,— to admit and accept everything... But for the life of me I could not help crying softly to myself.

"Kneel down on this chair", went on Miss Evelyn, whose voice was shaking slightly, "and say a little prayer for courage to endure your punishment, and for grace to enable you to repent of your faults While you are doing this, Miss Mabel will prepare your body... kneel !

Shamed and despairing, I obeyed her, trying in vain to concentrate my whirling thoughts

upon some form of prayer. But the words would not come ; and all my attention was fixed upon what was happening behind me.

For the quick, deft fingers of the assistant mistress had turned back my skirt, and were pinning it to my shoulders. Next, my little silk underskirt was treated in the same manner, as well as my little lace petticoat. I was wearing a pair of white drawers, simple and neat. which clung to my more intimate parts, and outlined them. It was buttoned, of course, down the sides. Miss Mabel unbuttoned it, back and front, and pullet the drawers down over my ankles.

I felt the cold air rush over my skin,—and shivered and moaned.

"Pray, Françoise !" said the grave, almost sepulchral voice of Miss Evelyn.

That was impossible, though I did not let them see it. Instead, I covered my tear-stained, burning face in my hands,— and waited...

Miss Mabel was now tightly rolling my chemise up over my hips. A moment later, both she and Miss Evelyn were contemplating my unveiled charms,—slowly, lingeringly, and with evident satisfaction !... And already my flesh quivered as if the whip had touched it !

"Are you ready, Françoise !" demanded Miss Evelyn, "we are".

I stammered out a timid, choking : "Yes dear Miss Evelyn".

I knew in that moment what men feel when they go to the hangman, or to the guillotine...

"Then come, child".

Miss Evelyn spoke entirely without anger. Could it be possible that she was about to do that to me ?

The triple whipping ! The triple whipping !... How the words terrified me... Still more so when I saw the strange position which I was to occupy. For Miss Mabel placed a chair by the window, and sat down in it. Then Miss Evelyn placed me against the back of the chair. So that I faced Miss Mabel's back. I then had to put my arms over her shoulders, and she grasped my hands in hers, so that I could not move Thus, if she willed, she could draw me over until I stood on tip-toe, all my joints cracking...

Miss Evelyn bent down, and tied each of my ankles to the leg of the chair facing it. Thus, bound hand and foot I was helpless, and entirely at their mercy.

For a moment, I experienced a sweet consolation. I leaned over and passed my lips to Miss Mabel's beautiful thick tresses, inhaling their perfume... But it was only for a moment,— temporary, fleeting favour of the Gods !

Miss Evelyn went over to my bed, and undid the package. In it was a leather glove, and a handful of nettles. Also, there was a long,

black, folded veil. There was something else, too. A long and strong switch of birch twigs !...

Miss Evelyn took up the glove, and fitted it to her right hand It fitted her so well that it must have been made especially for her I watched her, terror-stricken ; and yet I still could not believe that all these preparations were being made for me.

As soon as she came near me, though, I let a moan escape me. She took my chin between her left-hand finger and thumb, and pulled my face towards her.

"What ! Making a noise already my child ? Wait a moment !... I am going to give you, on your bare thighs, the firts whipping of the three ones. And to make you feel as you would, I shall use, as you see, a rubber glove".

And so saying, she held it up for me to see, and touched me lightly on the cheek with it... The contact of the cold, slippery thing gave me a mixed feeling of sensuality and disgust...

Then Miss Evelyn leant over me, and put her left arm round my waist, in the classical Grecian way. She pressed her left against the chair, and between my thighs... Then she said to Miss Mabel :

"Dear Mabel, please hold this naughty child's hands very tightly in yours"

"Certainly, Miss Noakes".

And Miss Mabel's hands pressed feverishly on

mine. It seemed to me, then, that all the warmth and vitality in her body passed into mine. I was glad of this ; and my shame increased a thousand fold. All these strange contacts offended, and yet pleased my modesty, — Miss Mabel's hands, her hair under my nostrils, and Miss Evelyn's left hand pressing against my skirts, against my thighs...

And it was under these conditions that I received the first blow...

It was not a violent one, but it made sound enough, in that little room ; and the part of my body on which it fell quivered pitifully. A kind of delirium had seized my brain, caused by the excitement and turmoil of all my senses. A mad rage and despair,—all the more strong because it was impotent, made me scream and cry,-pray and blaspheme, speak words of alternate hate and love to the two mistresses, and say the wildest, strangest things. Now I threatened Miss Mabel, or kissed her wonderful hair, —or bit it. But in vain, in vain could I tear my hands away from her burning clasp.

And in the midst of these strange manifestations the smacks fell,at small,regular intervals. The severity of them increasec,with regular method. I was in for it now, abandoned to my fate.

The smacks now were stronger, louder, more painful. Soon, a slow intense heat spread across my posterior.

At first, I had contracted myself, instinctively and spasmodically, as if by so doing I would feel the punishment less. But I could not do this for long, I found out. I had not the power... and very soon I gave up the attempt, shut my eyes, and clenched my teeth.

As she whipped, Miss Evelyn, as was her want, scolded.

"Ah, Miss Françoise! Scarcely arrived, and yet so cunning!... So you wished to speak to Maud, unknown to me, did you?" Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! "Well, you are receiving now — "Smack! Smack! — " the same punishment as she did". Smack! Smack! Smack! "And you were a little liar—"Smack! Smack!—"play-actress—" Smack! Smack!— "Little hypocrite". Smack! Smack! "Bold, stupid, deceitful girl! "Smack! Smack! "But happily there is a remedy for all this... oh, yes..."Smack! Smack! Smack! "One uncovers one's seat... like this... and is treated and humiliated and punished like the naughty little.. silly little... child one is! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

I writhed and twisted about, helplessly, My veins were now as if on fire. Even at the moment when the pain was not so bad, I seemed to need the same cruel stroke as before. But with the pain was mingled the pleasure,—a queer kind of irritated pleasure, which could

only be allowed by each succeeding stroke of the whip. I wanted what I feared... And now, as i write this, I must admit that I have seen many strange things in my day ; and it would take a great deal to make me blush. Yet in spite of everything, I have only to think of this... and the blood rushes uncontrollably to forehead, neck, and ears,—over every part of my body.

I cannot remember all that Miss Evelyn did and said, at the time of that first whipping. It was all so new and strange to me, and I was so terrified and bewildered. Nor can I say what I felt, as the young are unalytical ; and can only feel. But that same night when, covered up in bed, cowering and exhausted under the sheets, I lived over that time again, in thought, every detail of the scene came back to me, — words, looks, actions, meanings. I re-lived them ; and then some of them, so terrible and so sensual that I dared not remember them, faded from me for ever.

As Miss Evelyn continued whipping me, I still wept, only more softly. I was succumbing to an indefinable languor, as if my conquered nerves could feel, for the moment, little more pain. Leaning my head on Miss Mabel's shoulder, I pressed my lips to her cheek, as if in a dream... as I did so, I felt her quiver from head to foot.

She turned her head slightly to one side, and murmured, as we stood almost mouth to mouth :

"Well, Francoise ?..... And how do you like your punishment ? And what do you think of it ?"

Her eyes were gleaming strangely behind her glasses. I murmured, pressing myself against her again, between my sobs :

"Oh, Miss Mabel, pardon !... But I don't know... I feel bewildered... Do tell Miss Neakes... pray Miss Neakes to stop... I will be such a good girl, if you do!"

The Headmisstress still continued whipping me, however. And I began to feel as if I had been drugged, and were sinking down... And as I went, I heard Miss Mabel murmur :

"No, Françoise ! You will have the triple whipping... You have only had the first one, yet... When one has been naughty, you know, one must put up with the consequences and expiate one's fault".

Just at this moment, Miss Evelyn stopped ; and letting my skirts fall from her left hand, she rested her right hand, bringing the other one down with all her force upon my inflamed posterior... Then she stood up straight, paused, and said to me :

" Well, this is your first whipping, Françoise, and I hope that you will remember it. You will remember it, won't you ?"

"Yes... Miss Evelyn... " I sobbed.

"I'll teach you to !... But we will now pass to the second part of your punishment... In a moment, Rest a little, dear Mabel. Let Françoise lean over the chair by herself, and come and look at her, and her shame !..."

My hands released, I covered my face with them, leaning my elbows upon the chair which Miss Mabel had left ; and weeping bitterly. Behind me I heard the two mistresees whispering; but I could not tell what they were saying.

What was going to happen next ?

I was not kept in ignorance of my fate for long. Miss Evelyn went over to the bed,and took from it a bundle of green stingingnettles, which I had already perceived. Thanks to her leather glove, she herself was protected from them, as she swished them, through the air, to frighten me.

She amply succeeded. Raising my head, I clasped my hands in suplication, and said, with pitiful entreaty :

"Dear Miss Evelyn, let my punishment stop at what you have just given me !... Please... I will never forget it, if you do... I will be ever so good... ever so grateful.., Oh, do forgive me ! I had no idea that the whip was like this ! But now I know, I will never again do anything to deserve it... It is terrible... I have been whipped so much... I will be good... You will see...

And you will forgive me... won't you ?... dear Miss Evelyn ?"

I spoke in hurried, broken tones, fear making me stumble, and repeat myself. For I was terrified of nettles though I had no idea what it would be like to be whipped by them. But very often, when walking in the garden at home, with my mother, I had been stung by them ; and my delicate skin had smarted for hours, and preserved the blisters for days... But to be whipped with them ! Especially in such a place ! Especially when one hasbeen whipped already,and one's tenderskin is sore and burning...

All that I thought to myself, as I implored Miss Neakes for mercy. But her face was implacable, — as implacable as mine wasagitated. And I understood, in that moment, that whether I said anything or nothing, It was all the same to her.

"All this nonsense of yours is simply useless, Françoise" she said. "You cannot get out of what you deserve to have, and nothing shall prevent you from having the triple whipping. Come, Mabel sit down again, please. And do your, Françoise, give Miss Mabel your hands, as before".

"Dear Miss Evelyn !" I sobbed again. "You will not really do it, will you ?... Oh, pardon — please —"

"Françoise !"

But already, Miss Mabel' firm, muscular white hand had grasped me,and all tentatives at resistance, moral or physical, were at an end.

"How long is it going to take you to learn obedience ?" asked the flagellante, severely.

And as she spoke she came close to me, and seized one of my ears between her finger and thumb. Then she swished it, lightly, with the nettles... Immediately I felt as if a thousand stings had entered into my skin ; and I gave a loud cry of fear. But that did not daunt Miss Evelyn. In fact, it must have incensed her further, for she passed to the other side of me, and did the same thing !..... It sent all the blood to my head, and hurt me terribly.

"And now", she continued, "prepare for the second whipping ! Cry, scream, yell, if you like ! It will avail you nothing. For not even the tenderest part, or most intimate part of your body escape my justice !"

So saying, she cut the air with the nettles, making them bend and hiss like evil-meaning serpents. How long and red they were ! They had small, dark leanes ; and were evidently the gross rank nettles of last year. They would hurt far more terribly than the smaller, spring ones...

I was now seized as before by Miss Neakes' powerful left arm. And then it started.

At once I felt the ardent burning of its terrible caress ; and I cried out more from terror than from actual pain. My skin, already heated from the first whipping, was extremely sensitive...But I must admit it, such a sensation as is given by stinging-nettles is more humiliating than painful, for it obliges one to scratch one's self uncontrollably, in every part of one's body. Frequently, one scratches and tears the skin, and the blood starts.

The blows were falling slowly and methodically. Miss Evelyn spared no part of my body, and knew how to take in, and not neglect, every part of it.

If only I could have scratched myself, there and then ! But Miss Mabel's hands were grasping me ; and the fact that I was prisoned in such a humiliating manner was not the least part of my punishment. I was bound hand and foot.

Miss Neakes whipped in silence. And the tufts of nettles looked strangely sinister and alive. Sometimes the mistress separated my limbs ; and the ends of the nettles, bending back, pierced deeply into me, augmenting my shame and increasing my feverishness. I cried and sobbed, writhed and twisted, prayed and threatened ; but all in vain. Miss Evelyn whipped, until there was not a leaf left upon the nettles.

When she stopped, I felt that I was done for I could hardly stand upright ; and my posterior was nearly cooked. So when Miss Neakes bade her her assistant release my hands, and rest herself, I was able, to my infinite blessed relief, to scratch myself all over, until the blood came.

Miss Evelyn had not foreseen that I would do that ; and it made her angry.

"Will you stop that at once, Françoise!" she cried, irritably. "If you — oh, you naughty little girl !... I will teach you to obey me !"

"Dear, dear Miss Neakes, do let me !" I implored. 'Just a little more !... It relieves me so !"

And as I spoke my nails sank voluptuously into my swoollen flesh, while I scratched furiously.

"Mabel ! Her hands ! seize her hands again !"

But the young mistress had already darted towards me, and had given me a tremendous box on the ear... I tried to step back to avoid the blow ; but I had forgotten that my feet were tied. I fell back upon my sore posterior, the following, and hitting, me on the head. Happily, my hair was thick, and received the greater force of the blow ; so my fall was more ridiculous than painful.

My two tormentresses raised me none too gently from the ground, and under pretext of

shaking off the dust from my clothes, gave me some hard smacks. Then Miss Mabel sat down in the chair again, and took my hands in hers.

"You shall pay me for that disobedience !" cried Miss Neakes who was exteremely angry and irritated. She was also extremely heated and no doubt gaving to whip so many times so often must have tired her... But she continued, calmly :

"You are now going to receive the third whipping, Françoise ! And if at the end of two days you are able to sit down after it, I consent to have a triple dose of it myself !... Now, in order to make you all the more sensitive to your punishment, I am going to carry out the advice of the scientific authorities upon the question,—and by deadening one or more of your senses, thus render the others more acute".

" Oh, Miss Evelyn !" I cried, wild with the terrors that my fertile imagination at once called up.

"In this case, I shall deaden your sens of sight, so that your sense of feeling and touch will be alert... I am going to cover you with this black veil here... You see it ?... Come !"

I begged, I implored, I wept. I even believed that I stormed and raged, and yelled like a mad thing. But without paying the slightest attention to me, Miss Evelyn held out the black veil.

Then she said, before throwing it over my

head and bust : "Kiss the rod, child ! Welcome it as your well-merited punishment ; and as such, kiss it with respect and submission,— aye, with gratitude !"

I looked, for the first time, at "Miss Rod". It was long, strong, and supple, and the hard twigs were bound tightly and closely together... I bent down and kissed it, though with utter repugnance. My will-power had left me, and my pride, as well as my moral scruples. For, in order to palliate Miss Evelyn's severity I would have descended to the lowest depths of any kind of degradation. Not that I need have done that ; for Miss Neakes' severity did not and was not likely to decrease. She whipped out of pure pleasure ; and to prevend her from whipping would have been like trying to take a bone from the mouth of a mad dog. She knew, too, how to get the most out of her efforts with a mininum amount of fatigue. There was a strange, methodical control about her passion which, in a way, I admired.

At first, of course, I was quite taken in by her, and imagined that she was really very tender-hearted, and only persisted in her severity from a very high sense of duty. Later, I came to understand... If only Maud had been able to tell me more ! It is so strange that at the critical moments of one's life one is so often abandoned to one's fate !

The terrible black veil now covered me, nearly stifling me as well. For to suit her purpose better, Miss Evelyn had doubled the thickness of the material. Utter darkness was in front of me, covering my ears and eyes,—almost my nostrils, which were repelled by the musty odour of the veil.

Miss Neakes, after pinning the veil down in front and behind, said to me :

"If you should ever have to go to the Black Cell, Françoise, you will not be covered in this veil. You will have thick, coarse sacking instead ; and will have to stand with it on for hours, while your posterior is exposed !..."

And these words seemed to flagellate and sting me with as much effect as the hand, the nettles, and anything else that the diabolical imagination of these women had invented...

Miss Evelyn put out her left hand again, and grasped me round the waist. With her knee she kept my leg crushed againts the chair. Then she said :

"You silly little girl ! You don't seem to have very much commonsense, do you ?,.. Just imagine, my dear Mable ! She has scratched the skin off with her nails, where I punished her... What do you think ot that !... And even then, she wouldn't obey me. Ah, my dear Françoise ! But I am going to teach you to obey me. From

the top of your head to the tip of your toe, you will become all Obedience !"

"Dear Miss Evelyn !" I sobbed, "I never meant... for one moment... Aaarrrh !...

The switch hissed in the air, falling with a loud "thwack" across my tender little seat...

Swish !... Swish !... Swish !... Swish !... I yelled as if I were going to die, it was so terrible. The pain was sharp, and seemed endless. It was unlike anything that anyone coufd imagine, who had not personally experienced it.

What I said during that terrible whipping I do not know. I have an idea that the strangest and perhaps the most horrible words left my mouth, mingled with inhuman cries, groans, and screams of terror and madness. I hardly heard all that Miss Neakes said during the performance, but these words come back to me as I write :

"Bad... dirty... disgusting little girl !... Take that !... I will teach you... your behind is made for the whip... And you will have it... Until the blood comes !"

Her words seemed to fall like lashes upon the soft grey matter of my brain as well. Rhythmically my body rose and sank with the blows. They soon stung me into a state of semi-coma, in which every-thing around me seemed unreal. I just heard Miss Mabel say :

"Her hands are going limp, dear Evelyn. I am afraid that she is going to faint !"

It was true. The whipping stopped, because I had fainted, and could no longer feel.

. . . . . .

When I came to myself I found that I was lying face downwards upon my bed. Miss Mabel held a bottle of smelling-salts to my nose ; and Miss Evelyn was devoting her maternal care to my torn and suffering body.

"She has recovered consciousness", said Miss Mabel.

Miss Evelyn continued bathing the parts with a wet towel, very gently. Then she bent over me, and taking my face in her beautiful, cruel hands, said :

"Well, Françoise ! And how do you feel now ?"

Her eyes, dark and gleaming, seemed to pierce me through.

"Better... Dear Miss Evelyn..." I stammered, crimson with confusion.

"It is nothing. In two days' time you will certainly be able to sit down... Well ? and how do you like the whip, Miss ?"

I lowered my eyes, and broke into renewed sobbing.

"Do you like being whipped ?"

An immense shame, which the third whipping had overcome with the intensity of its pain, took possession of me once more.

"Oh !. . No... Dear Miss Evelyn !" I stammered.

"Then you must do nothing more to deserve it, Françoise. For I give you my word that whenever you deserve it you will get it. For I am already too fond of you to allow the least error to go uncorrected. I am going to make an accomplished young lady of you ; and there is only one way of doing that : The whip,— and again, the whip ! And then some more... And now give me the kiss of peace, and thank me from the bottom of your heart,—if, indeed, any gratitude can yet be found there !"

I stammered, utterly cowed, that I thanked her... Whereupon her lips bent down, and touched mine.

Oh, that kiss !... More than the one Miss Mabel had given me, after that box on the ears, it troubled my senses, and awoke a most terrible sense of shame. The blood beat loudly in my temples, and my heart beats were so rapid and violent that they nearly choked me...

Miss Evelyn, noticing my emotion, embraced me again.

"I believed that you have been punished enough for the first time, darling !" she said. "I will now bathe and lotion your posterior, and leave you to rest..."

So saying, while Miss Mabel went to fetch some lint, she began to anoint my sore parts

with an ointment, the composition of which I ignored. She did all this very carefully and thoroughly, soothing the pain in all the smallest parts of my posterior. Nor did her delicate care leave untouched certain parts, more than once offending my modesty. But I took good care to say nothing, in case I should be whipped again. It was so easy to let one's self in for it, as they whipped upon the slightest provocation.

She ordered me, then, to get up. I obeyed with great difficulty, for it seemed to me that an enormous mass of lead weighed me down behind!

"There!" exclaimed Miss Evelyn. "That is finished!... And the day after to-morrow you will take your place in class. In the meantime you will rest, and meditate upon your past misconduct. And now I forgive you, darling!"...

And very dignified, and sweeping up her skirts, she followed Miss Mabel, who was already in the corridor.

As soon as the door was closed, I tried to walk...I could scarceley do so. Every movement that I made sent a quiver of pain through my jangled nerves, — especially in that part of me which had suffered so cruelly... What Had I really suffered such terrible shame? I could hardly believe it... And yet, everything around me bore witness to my awful humiliation! Miss

Evelyn had taken away the black veil and the leather gloves; but, no doubt, to increase my shame by reminding me of what had just transpired, she had left the broken bundle of stinging nettles, and the switch. ... I approached them, drawn by a subtle kind of fascination and picked them up.

Thanks to the ministrations of the Headmistress, I was feeling just a little less sore. The wounded parts were burning hot, still, however, though the warmth soothed me in a way. My brain was clearing, and I was now able to reason the matter out, and face reality. But this Reality proved to be a terrible one to face. For I realized the whole extent of my misfortune, humiliation, — and worse than that, impotence.

Mechanically I noticed how few leaves remained upon the nettles, and how bent the twigs of the "Rod" were! The other leaves lay strewn and bent upon the carpet, like little curled up monsters which had poured their venom into me before they died!... How awful it had all been... How awful!... And what pain and shame and suffering of all kinds were represented by all those things which had been broken and twisted on my body!

A restless fever burned in my veins now; and I threw myself upon my bed, sobbing convulsively. I slept brokenly, awaking at short

intervals, with a start of nightmare terror... The little dark maid servant brought me my dinner, but I felt too sick to eat it. Without thinking, however, I sat down in a chair, in front of the table...

Immediately, a sharp cry of pain escaped me, and I rose in haste. It was absolutely impossible for me to sit down for even a minute; and in trying to do so I had only once more awakened the terrible pain, temporarily lulled.

I forced myself to eat standing up, — hurriedly, humiliated again by the ridiculous position in which I found myself. Then, when I had replaced the dishes on the tray, and the tray on the slab, I undressed and got into bed.

I fell into a feverish sleep, tormented by nightmares in which tall ladies with eyeglasses ran after me with whips of twining snakes, and led me into fields of giant nettles!

CHAPTER V

I am introduced. The Apology. The Class. The "Central Heating" at Birch Villa.

Two days later,— I was surprised to find that Miss Evelyn had kept her promise— I left my cell. But not before the Headmistress had been to pay me a visit, accompanied by the horrible old doctor.

This visit overwhelmed me with confusion, as might have been expected. I was required to lift up my clothes, and betray the state I was in. Then the doctor made a thorough—too thorough— examination, and said that I had evidently received a good whipping, and that it would certainly do me a great deal of good. I ought, really, to stay another day in the cell, for the complete healing of my body... So saying, he tapped my posterior again, several times, making me wince with pain and shame every time he did so; and then ordered Miss

Evelyn to apply some more of the same ointment she had used before.

"Certainly", said Miss Neakes. "I quite see that she must be allowed to recover entirely. She will have to expose herself as soon as she is introduced to the class, as an apology to me and a warning to them. Besides, she may have to thus humiliate herself several times in the course of the day, if she is not good !"

And the Headmistress looked at me severely, as she spoke. Doctor Sharpe remained until Miss Evelyn had bathed and anointed the parts completely. Then he and Miss Neakes retired together.

What was the "apology" of which she had spoken ?... My last night in that cell was disturbed by the anxiety I felt concerning it and the next day I awoke dispirited and exhausted, as if all the "springs" in my body were broken.

When I was dressed and ready, Miss Mabel coming to help me, I was led, at about eight o'clock in the morning, into her class.

On a little platform, against the wall, was the mistress' chair and facing that were rows of desks, five in a row. A big, barred window opened over the grounds, giving the impression of being a prison window. Moreover the whole house wore the aspect of a prison, the only agreeable rooms being those of Miss Neakes and Miss Mabel.

Sitting at these desks, my new companions were watching me with eager curiosity. Maud, I recognized at once,for I had caught a glimpse of her through the hole in my cell partition. I looked at her first,-- a mingled glance of condemnation for her treachery, and entreaty for her support in this trying ordeal that was before me. Happily she returned my gaze so affectionately that I felt wonderfully soothed and calmed, almost at once.

Miss Mabel led me up to a vacant desk.

"There is your place, Françoise", she said. "Can you sit down?"

I reddened at the question. To increase my confusion, I noticed that at these words the girls looked at me, staring maliciously, knowingly, mockingly.

"Yes, Miss", I replied timidly.

"Are your parts less painful,— your posterior less painful?" she insisted. She was rejoicing at my obvious confusion, and prolonging her own pleasure. I looked at her... and seeing that she was so serious and severe, I replied, battling with the shame I felt :

"Yes, Miss".

"Very good. You will take your place at that desk, then, when you have made your apology. Come here."

She led me up to a chair which was placed near her desk, the back of it being turned to

the wall. She told me to kneil on this chair, and face my class-mates. Then she said to them :

"Here is a new companion of yours, who arrived ten days ago. She has just left her cell, where her bad conduct and her hypocrisy earned a severe whipping from our dear Headmistress. She will now take her place amongst you, and I do not doubt that your wisdom and obedience will be edifying to her. But, before she does this, I insist upon her making the Apology, and recognizing the inferior position which she occupies amongst you, as of one whose education is only beginning, and whose stupid pride requires its humiliation. Give her your "welcome", therefore, in the way that she deserves it".

Then, turning to me, Miss Mabel handed me a large sheet of paper, covered with a large bold handwriting... The blood was singing in my ears, and tears obscured my sight.

"Read that aloud, and read it distinctly, please!" ordered Miss Mabel. "And while you do, I will prepare you to receive your welcome".

She passed behind me, took up some pins from a tray on her desk, and began to turn back my skirts.

What was going to happen to me now ? I had done nothing whatever to deserve another pu-

nishment !... I felt choked with terror, shame, and emotion ; and the written words danced before my eyes. Surely such an injustice as another.

"Well ?" The imperious voice of miss Mabel broke in upon my reflections. "What are you waiting for ? Why don't you start ?"

Making a great effort, I wiped my eyes, and began to read,—in a voice broken with half-controlled sobs.

Too many years have passed since then to enable me to remember the phrasing of that strange document ; but the sense of it I shall never forget. Here it is... First of all I was to apologize to my companions for coming before them in such a state of disgrace, having given their mistresses such trouble almost as soon as I had arrived. I acknowledged that I was a very ignorant girl, but desirous of improving myself ; and that I was full of faults. (Here followed a lengthy list of same). But, with all my heart, I begged my dear mistresses to punish me in every way, with implacable severity, until all my defects were eradicated. Finally I assured them of my deep, humble gratitude, if they themselves would contribute, as well as they could, to my correction and edification... Then I declared that I was to receive their "Welcome", from their hands. It would be a humiliating ceremony which would show them, and

me, of how little importance I was in the eyes of anybody...

I finished the reading in tears. Humiliated ? I certainly was that ! And frightened, too, as I tried to imagine what the "ceremony of the welcome" would be like. It was mysterious, very ; and yet I could almost guess at the main theme of it... For while I had been reading, Miss Mabel had been turning up my skirts, and undoing my drawers. And I could now feel the cold air upon my sore, shamed seat.

For that morning was a very cold one. Winter was approaching, and I could feel the nipping frost in the air. The little noses of my companions were red ; and the girls who suffered from chilblains were wearing black knitted mittens. My own nose was red, and the tears froze on my face !

Miss Mabel took the paper out of my hands.

"Bend over the desk, Françoise", she said, "and join your hands together. Do not move, —unless you wish to obtain... well, you know what ! Come, young ladies ! Stand up, and advance in order of merit".

The girls rose. I saw, with terror, that they were coming towards me in Indian file. They passed along behind me, and as soon as the first one came up to me, the others stopped.

"Ellen !"

Four vigorous smacks, which made me jump

and quiver, fell upon my exposed flesh,—sore from the recent whippings. Two fell upon my left side, and two upon my right,—slowly and methodically, but with the full force of the girl's arm... Then Ellen passed on.

"Your turn, Victoria !..."

Again, four stinging smacks made me groan aloud. I would have given anything to hide the place from their gaze, covering it with my hands ; but the proverb says that fear is the beginning of wisdom and I knew enough of Miss Mabel by now to know that she would punish me very severely for trying to minimize the terrors of my ordeal. So I kept, by a strong effort of will-power, my hands over my face, though I bit my fingers hard, to keep me from crying out.

"Daisy ! Quick !..."

Smack ! Smack !... Smack ! Smack !...

"Maud ! Your turn now..."

Smack ! Smack ! ! Smack ! ! ! Smack ! ! ! !

Cruel Maud ! Of all the girls there, she was the one who struck me the most severely !... And yet, I knew that, though it hurt me more, I preferred her smacks to those of the others, and would have been quite disappointed if she had not touched me... And to add to the complexity of it all, I wondered why she had smacked me... And I longed to be able to pay her out,—in her own coin !

Jane hit me vigorously, but after Maud's touch it seemed childish,—a mere mosquito bite. As for Alice, it was almost as if she caressed me, for she was the youngest of them all, —quite a child, in fact ; and her little hand made no impression upon me.

But the moral suffering I endured was very great. It lasted until Miss Evelyn, unable to resist the temptation of giving me two final blows, unpinned my skirts, and let them down again, carefully touching the burning place which had just received twenty-six energetic "welcomes".

"And now", said Miss Mabel, "we are all going to speak English Françoise, and you must try and understand our words, and, above all, interpret our gestures. This is the best way of learning any language"

She then began to give a series of orders in English. I could understand a great deal she said by simply watching what the other girls did ; but I made many mistakes that day, and for many days to come. And upon reflection, I must admit that this method seems infinitely superior to others ; for, a few weeks later, I had learnt a great deal, and could, with inevitable mistakes, answer what was said to me. For example, Miss Mabel would speak to me, and a pupil would write down what she had said on a blackboard, at the same time making the gesture of explanation in dumb show. I would then

write down what I knew from the blackboard ; and the gesture would complete the sense.

Perhaps It was to discipline us and make us stoics, for the class-room was always icy cold, and never heated. Our hands shook so that we could hardly hold the pen... Or was it because Miss Mabel wanted us to write shakily so that she might "shake" us for it ?... Anyhow, at the end of these uncomfortable dictations she would come down to us, ruler in hand ; (it was a dark, leather ruler) and passing behind her pupils, begin her inspection. As she inspected, she either fingered the ruler at her side impatiently ; or else drew it across the cheek of the girl whose work was being examined.

We all sat in order of merit,—in the same order that they had advanced to whip me. I was the last, and sat at the end of the two rows.

One day I noticed that when she was standing near Ellen, her face suddenly assumed a look of severe significance. I could see Miss Mabel's profile, from where I sat, and I knew that a storm was brewing.

"Your writing is very bad, Ellen", said Miss Mabel in a low, calm voice, pinching her ear", I have never seen you write as badly as that before. You know how strict I am upon the subject, too... Are you itching to be whipped, by any chance ?"

Afraid, and feeling very uncomfortable, Ellen

wriggled about on her chair. And yet I felt that the touch of Miss Mabel's hand on hers filled the girl with emotion. Or did I judge Ellen too much by myself, perhaps ? For I knew that it would have been the same with me.

Of course, people who have not the same temperament as one's self cannot be expected to understand this ; but the people who do understand are many,—and that is sufficient for me. Therefore it is a truth that to some people, the hand of a flagellant,—the mere sight of it, the mere touch of it, even, is sufficient to awaken their senses. It was so to me. The slightest caress, the lightest touch,—and I was the willing prey to my keeper's hand. I was like a little tamed lioness, who both cringes to and adores her tamer, strange as it all may seem... Explain it I cannot. All I can say is that such a thing exists.

Later, I found out that it was the same,—with Maud, and all the others. Or nearly all... For Victoria seemed somewhat of an exception. Cold, very submissive, and rather placid, she only cried because she was hurt, and not because she was shamed. As for the others, I never came to know them very well, or to become intimate with them as I had with Maud ; but judging from what I saw, heard, and overheard, they were quite "suitable" pupils, in every respect...

But to return to Ellen and Miss Mabel. The latter had closed the girl's copy-book, and had taken her head between her hands... I could see that Ellen's profile was crimson, and that the tears were hanging upon her eyelashes.

"Why did you write that so badly Ellen ?".

"I don't know, Miss", stammered the poor girl. "It was so cold in here... My fingers were numb... And I could hardly hold the pen".

"Indeed !" was Miss Mabel's sole, sarcastic comment. Then, letting go of Ellen, she passed to the next girl, Victoria.

No sooner had she examined her work than she cried :

"But this is absolutely shocking ! What abominable handwriting you have. Or is it the cold, Victoria, which makes you write like this !".

"Yes, Miss", replied the tall girl calmly. "The window is open, and my fingers are frozen".

"Then I will soon warm them for you", said Miss Mabel grimly. "And besides that... But first of all I will inspect the others".

I was trembling with fear already, for it really was cold, and my own handwriting was not nearly as good as usual.

Miss Mabel, at every inspection, gave a cry of indignation, and promised each of her pupils that she would soon increase their temperature... Tears were in all eyes just then.

When it was my turn, Miss Mabel said that she knew I was capable of writting better than that. I was careless and unwilling. I was still sulking a little... Well, I must receive my little "warning up"... like all the others.

I felt terrified at this. But what could I do,— or say ?

Our classmistress then returned to Ellen.

"Such wilful neglect of your work", she said, "cannot be allowed to go unpunished. Your fingers are cold, Ellen ? I will warm them for you. Give them to me! "

The girl obeyed, bursting into tears.

Miss Mabel gave her a dozen hard slaps with the ruler.

The pupil tried hard to retrain her cries, and succeeded more or less ; but she could not restrain her quivering body, and her sobs. The pain was too sharp.

"The other one, now", said Miss Mabel calmly.

Ellen obeyed, without a word of protest or excuse. And a dozen more smacks descended upon the other hand, falling with dull, heavy thuds.

"I will teach you to write properly !" cried Miss Mabel. "I will see that you are warm,— hands and feet, young ladies,—in front and— behind !...".

It was now Victoria's turn. She heaved a few deep, resigned, sentimental sighs, but received

the "double ruling" without a single cry escaping her lips. As for Miss Mabel, she continued to scold, while she was punishing so cruelly, and inflicting such deep humiliation. Her face was so calm and controlled that the sight impressed me in spite of myself.

Daisy made much more of a fuss than the other two, when being punished. She yelled as if she were being strangled ; and in consequence had to receive three supplementary smacks on the open palm, with threats of "a roasting", should she still feel cold...

Maud accepted her fate disdainfully. Disdain suited her pretty face well ; but it made a different impression upon the mistress, who struck her twice as hard, and threatened her with bread and water for supper, as well as a douche. I wondered why she should have the latter. I wonderee hard...

Jane was calm enough, but Alice, the youngest of all, yelled like a cat who had fallen on hot bricks. Exasperated, Miss Mabel, after warming up her hands in the usual way, laid her accross her knee, face downward ; and applied the ruler to her ankles.

When my turn came round, my heart was beating fast... I was almost inclined to fling myself at Miss Mabel's feet, kiss them, and win her right over to me by the supremely endearing words I should say to her... But I could

not very well do that in front of my companions ; and so I held out my hands to her, and she beat them without pity. For she took far more pleasure out of whipping us than of teaching us anything, or improving us in any way. All this was a cloak, an excuse, for her strange, cold frenzy... I saw this very soon, with fear and horror. And yet... There was a strange joy, a feeling of promised voluptuousness.

Miss Mabel had therefore found a pretext,— she always did find one—for whipping seven young girls. And she now ordered them to rise, bend forward over their desks and lift up their skirts. In fact, they were to place themselves in that position in which they were usually whipped.

Quickly, like perfectly drilled soldiers, they rose as one, and placed themselves in the position ordered. The discipline of that school was stricter than I ever imagined discipline could be. How they did it, I dont't know, and can't understand, in spite of what I know and have been through.

I, too, was standing up ; but what with my shame, fear, and outraged modesty, I did not at once imitate by companions. Miss Mabel's voice roused me to obedience.

"Well, Françoise ? Do you want an extra ration of it ? Or perhaps three doses—".

I waited no more. Leaving over my desk, I put back my skirts with clumsy haste, and waited.

As long as I live I shall never forget that day, that sight which met my eyes. My companions, as I have said before, were all of different ages. Victoria was the eldest, seventeen. Then came Ellen, supple and well-built. Then Maud, whom I have described before. And then, though much younger, Daisy and Jane. They were very dissimilar to each other, for Daisy was fair, and as plump as a little patridge. She was already a woman grown, as regarded her bust and posterior ; but Jane was dark-skinned, and a gipsy type, with a bold, flashing glance, and well-developed muscles.

Alice, the "Benjamina", of the small class, was slender in figure, with hair the colour of autumn leaves, and a sly, vicious look... But she was plump and round enough to please her two mistresses, at all events.

And now we were all bending over our deks, our skirts in the air, our posteriors exposed. Our drawers hung down straight, as we had let them fall when unbuttoning them... And then I saw—and the sight nearly made me faint—with a curious thrill of shame, desire and awe, —six pairs of naked legs, thighs, and posteriors, quivering a little under the impact of the cold air !...

Triumphantly, Miss Mabel raised the lid of her desk, and took from inside it a black leather discipline. The velvet on the handle I noticed significantly, was worn threadbare... Then she came down the platform, looking at me with such terrible severity that, mad with fear and shame, I hastened to copy the gestures of my companions.

I shall never forget that day. It showed to what a degrading pitch of terror, weakness, and submission I had already been brought, that this time, and for the first time, I prepared myself for the whip !... With smarting fingers, I turned back my clothes, exposing my naked body !... Verily, I was making swift progress, here at this awful school ! What was to come next ?

As I thought of that, wondered, and imagined all kinds of things, a mist swam before my eyes, and I felt as if I were swooning for very shame

But the feeling was short-lived, for the mist dissolved in tears. I then saw Miss Mabel bending over Ellen, and drawing her skirts further back, so as to expose her posterior more ; then she raised the discipline ; and after that I heard nothing but the swish of the thongs of it on the girl's flesh, and her heartrending moans...

Ellen was a beautifully made girl, and was

showing herself off to full advantage,—as, I may say without any false modesty, were we all. But Miss Mabel, whose anger seemed strangely out of proportion to the gravity of the offence, whipped severely and rapidly ; and at each descent of the discipline upon the flesh, the posterior quivered convulsively, and its two hemispheres rolled against each other like jellies. Little by little, long red streaks appeared, crossing the seat, and disappearing into some little hidden fold of the body.

Later, the whole surface was the colour of brick red, and the skin in some places rose in purple blisters... I watched the sight, fascinated. I almost ceased to breathe, and really thought that at any moment my heart might cease to beat. I felt that Miss Mabel was cruel, and would have liked to tell her so, — to say : "Don t whip her until the blood comes ! It is nearly coming... The sight is making me sick... Dear, dear Miss Mabel, dont't ! I love you so ! .... But you will not do the same thing to me, will you,—your little Françoise ?"

But, of course, not one of these words passed my lips. I dared not, and could not speak. Miss Mabel's face intimidated me too much There were strange lights playing over it, as if a blood-red light reflected from the girl's crimson-stained body, were bathing her features in its sinister rays.

But the mistress did not go to the extreme I so much dreaded Instead, she put her discipline down on the desk, and placing one hand flat on the surface of the whipped part, raised Ellen's swollen and tear-stained face with the other. Then she said, in a menacing voice:

"You are going to write better in future ?"

"Oh, yes !... Dear Miss Mabel !" cried the poor girl, sobbing.

"You don't feel quite so cold now, I hope ?".

"N-not quite, dear Miss Mabel...".

"Good, what I have just given you is a Cure All, and a sovereign remedy. I am now going to apply it to your little companions ; and so much the worse for you if ever I see such writting again in your copy-book !",

She raised her hand as she spoke, and tapped the swoollen, quivering flesh. Then taking up her discipline again, she came and stood in front of Victoria, whose face was anxious and afraid.

"Come ! Bend your head down !" commanded Miss Mabel.

"Please... dear Miss Mabel... dont't hit me too hard !" entreated the big girl.

At any other time and in any other place ; I should have deemed the situation ridiculous. As it was, I had not a very great desire to laugh, as may be imagined.

Miss Mabel began by giving Victoria a vigorous smack upon the cheek.

"Take that to begin, with !" she cried. "And since I know what kind of behaviour to expect from you, give me your hands, and I will tie them up !"

"Oh, dear Miss Mabel !" cried the girl. "Please let me off !... I will be so good !..."

"You will be whipped, Victoria, until you bleed, my dear, if you go on any more with this nonsense ! Your hands !"

"Yes, dear Miss Mabel... Here they are... My hands..."

For to calm the ire of her mistress she would have given her feet, or laid her head down on the floor !... Ellen, in spite of her pain and shame, and heavy eyes, lost not a jot of this scene,—nor did we others, as we waited for our turn to come. But I remember that I looked at Ellen and envied her, knowing that her punishment was over, and my turn would be a long time in coming, What suspense to wait through ! And how I would love to be in her place !

Yes, I had to see five more good whippings, before I was whipped ; and I wondered if I I would be able to see them without breaking down in utter demoralization.

Miss Mabel now took a long piece of string out of her pocket,—she was never without

string, or anything necessary for a punihsment, since she inflicted them often, and in all circumstances, however strange or unforeseen. So now she took Victoria's wrists and bound them, indifferent to the girl's entreaties, and stifled moans.

"There! That suits me better!" cried Miss Mabel. "If I did not do that, you would keeep your hands to cover the place destined for the whip! For you are as stupid as a baby of four, in some ways. But you will soon grow out of that!" Flip! Flop! Flop! Flap! Flip! Flip!

To right and left, in front and behind, the thongs of the discipline, supple and serpent-like, writhed themselves round the girl's soft, white curves, and bit into her plump flesh. And little by little the skin grew rose-couloured. then crimson, and then purple. Victoria yelled, and her yells unnerved me, finishing by making me angry ; for her voice was strident and harsh, and not musical, like Maud's. And yet, forgetting that in a very short time to come I was to receive similar treatment, I almost longed to see Miss Mabel make the girl's flesh leap and quiver. It was now so thick and insensible that I felt her yells were exaggerated in order to deceive Miss Mabel, and make a martyr, of herself. Had it not been for the purple streaks which were dyeing the skin, and which amply testified o the power of the discipline and the ability

of the whipper, I should have believed Maud's skin to have been made of leather! Was Miss Mabel taken in by this, and afraid to increase her severity? Did she believe that Victoria was thinskinned, and peculiarly susceptible to pain?

I soon found out. For Miss Mabel, undeceived, scornful and angry, redoubled the severity of her blows, as well as their frequency. And then the taut skin broke at last. Large rubies appeared upon the skin, and were broken and scattered by each fresh blow. In a few moments, the blood was running dow the thighs in a zigzag stream.

Miss Mabel stopped, and put down her discipline, wiping her forehead, on which the perspiration stood in beads. Then she struck Victoria twelve more blows on the swoollen posterior, with her naked hand.

"Take this! And this! This! And this! "Smack! Smack! Smack! I'll teach you to yell like that, you great mass of gelatine! And this punishment will be a lesson to you, I hope?"

"Yes.,. Y-yes... Dear Miss Mabel!"

But the mistress had already fallen upon Daisy. The girl's face had suddenly turned from a dull crimson to a deathly white. In a few seconds were concentrated a deep, intense emotion, which shook her from head to foot... When Miss Mabel leant over her she have one cry, a

desperate cry for mercy ; but the brutal hand of the flagellant had seized her by the hair, forcing her head down upon her desk. Her hands were gripped, and caught up behind her. I noticed that they were frail, delicate little hands, which looked as if a rough grasp would break them, like pieces of dainty, fragile china.

Daisy's drawers fastened at the side ; and she had already undone them, letting them fall down over her ankles, and exposing her nakedness for punishment... The discipline rose in the air, its thongs hissing and curling like angry serpents, and fell like a shower of sharp, stinging arrows upon the tender flesh.

Lam ! Lam ! Flip ! Smack !,.. Oh, Miss Mabel's face, at that moment ! The sight of it fascinated me even more than that of the girl's naked posterior... Her eyes gleamed, and her mouth was compressed in a firm, straight line. Her nostrils quivered, and her face was spasmodically. From time to time she drew her tips back over her five white teeth, like a dog about to snarl, or even to bite... And the whipping went on all the time,— on until the skin turned from pale rose to red, from red to crimson, and from crimson to purple. On, until the poor tortured flesh rose in blisters.

Daisy wept, sobbed, groaned and entreated...

Then Miss Mabel put down the discipline, and began to use her hands.

Smac! Smack! Smack! Smack!

"Wifl you promise to write better, miss! Do you?"

"Yes! Yes! Oh, yes! I... I..."

"Yes,—sho?" Smack! Smack!"

"Yes, Miss Mabel. Dear Miss Mabel... I will write better... I will... I really will..."

"Very well, then, we shall see!... Now, pretty Maud, it is your turn!"

Maud was very pale, and her eyes seemed to be losing themselves in her head. Anyone would have thought that she was going to faint. But the whipping began, all the same, though the soft, intimate parts of her body protested, quivering with indignation,—and pain!... But the lash of the whip seemed to put new life into the girl, for she cried and screamed with all the power of her excellent lungs. Then, as her cries seemed to put new life into Miss Mabel, the latter redoubled her blows. Maud's entreaties were all in vain...

"When it is my turn", I thought, "I will try not to cry out".

Meantime, Maud's plump little posterior was fast becoming a dull red colour...Then the skin began to swell, criss-crossed with blue stripes, which began to swell, and threatened to burst, letting out the blood underneath them... A minute later, and this happened. A red drop welled upon the skin, speading almost immedia-

tely : and soon, a red trickle of blood, followed by another, was running down the thighs.

Smack ! Smack ! Smak ! Smack !.... It was the crisp hand smacking which had now come into play. And after a severe final blow, Miss Mabel put her hand under Maud's chin, and tilted up her head.

"You usually write very well, Maud ; but this time, your handwriting is absolutely abominable. That is why I have just tanned your obstinate little hide rather roughly, perhaps. Give me your fingers ! Are they warm yet ? Yes, indeed ! They are burning !... Are you going to begin again, Miss ?"

"No, dear Miss Mabel ! No !"

"Let us hope so. Otherwise, you know... kiss the discipline !"

She held the thongs. still warm and blood stained to the girl's lips. It was the greatest humiliation that she ever inflicted ; and, hardened as the girls were, it never failed in its effect. Then Miss Mabel, whose ardour I could see was increasing with every girl she whipped, fell upon little Jane, whom she slapped, beat, and whipped furiously, speechlessly, but until the blood came, too...

Then the poor little girl was released, and I realized that there was only one more left, before my turn should come. It was Alice.

The hail of blows fell mercilessly upon her

delicate, shrinking flesh, the latter bruising quickly, and becoming purple,—leaping and trembling. Alice yelled dreadfully ; and yet it seemed to me that in the midst of Miss Mabel having let her terrible passion loose, (and she was a terribly passionate woman) she did not lose sight of the fact that the younger pupils could not bear as much punishment as the older ones. She gave Alice, therefore, a shorter and milder punishment,

When she was free, the little girl began vigorously rubbing her posterior, as if to efface the painful injury to which she had been subjected...

I noticed no more. Miss Mabel stood before me, her face threatening, and her smile both angry and ironical... I gazed at it, fascinated.

"Decidedly, Francoise", she began , "your seat seems to be predestined for the whip !"

She was leaning towards me, speaking in a quick, low voice, her breath burning my cheek.

I raised supplicating eyes to her face, while great tears rolled down my cheeks. No one but a fiend, or an image of stone, would, I thought, be deaf to such a dumb, disperate appeal. But I had yet to learn to know Miss Mabel. Not that she was unmoved,—far from it ; for an expression of mingled cruelty and voluptuousness stole over her face. Her lips were drawn back over her white, even teeth ; and her pale, severe face almost touched my own...

For a moment, I actually believed that she was about to bite me !... No... For my flesh shivered suddenly at the contact of her cold hand, feeling for my skirts, in order to uncover me to more advantage,—for herself !

"Are you not made to be whipped, Françoise ?"

I felt suffocated, and could not reply.

"Will you answer my question, Françoise ?"

Her nails suddenly sank fiercely into my skin, and I gave a smothered cry. I was under the grip of a panther, and no mistake !

"Oh !... Dear Miss Mabel... I suppose... I am, I mean, made to be whipped...

"You suppose you are ?"

"Oh, pardon, Miss Mabel... I am made to be whipped !"

I was sobbing bitterly... She only said to me, however :

"And whipped you will be, here, my fine girl ! Your hide will burn and sting, throb and bleed, more than once, I promise you. And to begin with".

In a trice, I felt myself seized, and flung down over the desk Miss Mabel nearly squashed my with neck one hand, and whole body with her body. With the other hand she turned back my skirt,petticoats, and chemise. Then as I waited, stifled, terrified, and contracting my muscles as much as I could, the first blow fell.

It nearly cleft me in two, lengthways and crossways, in an oblique line, which crossed the two divisions of my posterior... The pain was awful ! Worse than the Rod itself, it seemed to me,—worse than anything ! I cut, stung, burned ; and cut, it seemed, into my heart, and through all my nerves.

How is it that in these moments of infinite torture, when one feels that after each blow of the whip, one can endure no more, one does not die ? The lungs are choking and stifled, and words refuse to pass the swelling throat ; while the tongue is purple and parched the head feels like bursting, and the heart nearly stops beating. And yet death does not come... For after a certain point has been reached, the pain dulls and deadens some of the senses, whilst others awake in their place. And one of those,—inseparable from flagellation—is the sense of shame.

And that is the most trying of all, for a debutante. It is the worst of all penances. And, I, as the blows resounded in my head like the sound of waves of pain beating lower down on my body, felt this shame. In vain I sough to break the rhytmic cadence of the flagellation. In vain I tried to escape from Miss Mabel's tight hand. Forgetting my previous resolution, I tried to yell ; but a muffled, rough sound was the only one that passed my lips. My veins

were swelling, and my hands beating wildly in the air. I was like a spider, laid flat, for my back to be beaten in, while I struggled in vain !

Flop ! Flop ! Flop ! Flop !... From time to time I caught some words spoken Miss Mabel,— words which were without sequence to me, because my cries, and the blows of the whip (which made a loud, roaring noise in my ears) sometimes drowned her words and interrupted them, All I can remember is that she said something like this to me .

"Frivolous little Françoise !... Yes, on your posterior... whipped until the blood comes... submission... application... taught by the whip... necessary humiliation... all part of a plan... only for your good... and whipped night and day... because I love you tenderly

Oh, cruel tenderness, then !... Can anyone imagine how shameful it is to be loved in such a way ?

At last !... The discipline is put down, and the smacks commence. But what smacks ! They sting and burn, and almost seem to shred my skin from me !

Miss Mabel rose at length. Instinctively I placed my hands over my poor, suffering seat, rubbing it, and sobbing !... But Miss Mabel took my head in her hands, one of which was burning—the one that had smacked me !—and the other cold as ice. I closed my eyes, swallo-

wing my shame. Once more the soft, troubling breath of the mistress fanned my cheeks. Her piercing eyes were fixed on mine, but mine were closed. And her voice was now trembling strangely, and was no longer quiet and controlled, She said :

"So you are going to be good and industrious, little Françoise ? And you will write better ?"

"Yes, dear Miss Mabel..."

If I could only have said "beastly Miss Mabel", "dirty, hypocritical Miss Mabel !" But I could not ; and I loathed myself for my duplicity, hypocrisy, and cowardice. I was like a beaten dog licking his master's hand... And yet... surely I would not have done that, had I not felt a certain pleasure.—disgusting, degrading, perhaps,—call it what you will—which excited me and roused me ! For, one cannot deny the fact, this is the effect which flagellation has upon the passive partner of its joys and pains.

Miss Mabel, too, was strangely stirred, for her voice and hands trembled... And at length, as if able to contain herself no longer, she said that which would make me blush to think of and repeat, had I not lost the gift of blushing long ago !

"You will come to me this evening, Françoise, and ask my pardon—in my room !"

I felt very confused, and not a little emba-

rassed. Pardon for what ? And why should I go to her room, and not the others ?... And why this evening ?... Why not now ?...

"Will you answer me, Françoise ? Or shall I assist your fluency with another application of the whip ?"

Always... always the whip !... No. Rather would I do anything than have any more of that... For the present,.. And yet the time was soon coming when I would do anything in order to have that !... I should have laughed anyone to scorn, though, if they had told me so !... How strange life is,—and all the complexities of our human nature !

"Yes, dear Miss Mabel...This evening... I will come !"

Dignified, raising her skirts as if she were about to cross a muddy street, the mistress returned to her desk, the discipline dangling in her fingers. And thus ended one of the most memorable days of my life. I remember it always, just as I remember, blushing throbbing, and choking with sensual emotion, the evening that I spent with Miss Mabel, when I went to "ask her pardon".

. . . . . .

The room was very pretty,—even luxurious. Miss Mabel received me in a dressing-gown of deep yellow velvet, I perceived at once that she was very scantily clad...

Sinking into an armchair, she drew me towards her... And then, under pretence of seeing whether the marks of the punishment she had inflicted that morning were healing, she pushed back my clothes and examined me in detail... She became more and more tender... I felt that I was drowning in a sea of sweet shame, and maddening tenderness... And if I have not forgotten to what a pitch Miss Mabel carried her strange solicitude for me, I cannot here write down the least detail concerning it.

CHAPTER VI

My friend Maud, Her story. How Miss Evelyn knocked the conceit out of her pupils.

Three months passed away without anything happening that was out of the common. I was very unhappy, of course ; for not a day passed without my earning a whipping for some trifling fault or other.

I must admit that I gradually grew accustomed to it, though I at first believed that I could never do so. The shame still remained, it is true ; but the pain grew much more bearable. There was only one thing which made me yell as if I were going mad : and that was the riding-crop. Happily its ravages were so excessively terrible that Miss Neakes and Miss Mabel rarely employed it.

Fortunately for me, also, I learned English rapidly, and fairly thoroughly, as I am quick and adaptable by nature intelligent, and have

a good memory. Thus at the end of these three months I understood all that was said to me, and could reply without making many mistakes.

But what helped and encouraged me more than anyting was my friendship with Maud. She told me, to, in Engliss. a thousand little anecdotes about herself and her companions ; and as her story is not without interest, I have seen fit to set it down for my readers.

Maud was an orphan, without either father or mother. A young aunt had brought her up, and they had lived in a little Yorkshire town. Her aunt was very kind to her indeed, until a new vicar came to the parish, and came to call upon aunt and niece. He often came, after that, and managed to impress the aunt with his knowledge and experience. He told her, from the very first, that she was bringing her niece up with too much indulgence ; and he stated that severity was the keynote of educational success. "A good whipping", he would often repeat, "is the best preparation, best sustenance, and best termination for a really sound education" He said this so often, and so convincingly, that her aunt, — who, after all, was only a woman, — grew to believe it.

Maud was only thirteen years old at the time ; but she thought with all her might against this man's insidious influence. In vain, the next

two years saw her punished severely, and more an more frequently. And the shame of it was appaling.

She was then a pretty girl, and very well developed for her fifteen hears. She grew observant and clever, too ; and one day she noticed that whenever she was laid across her aunt's knee for a whipping, the clergyman would be hidden in an adjoining apartment, — hidden, but able to see everything that passed. Then, when it was all over, he would come in, and comfort and congratulate the aunt...

When she found out that she made such a fuss, threatening to inform the whole countryside, that they shut her up, and beat her with rods until she was half dead. Finally they decided to get rid of her, in order to avoid any possibility of a scandal. A week later, at nightfall, a cab drove up. Maud and the vicar got into it, and they drove off. At daybreak they were at Birch Villa... There the clergyman, after a long interview, said good-bye to her, and drove away.

As in my case, Maud had eight days in a cell ; and at the end of that time, Miss Evelyn and Miss Mabel came to see her. They sermonized her, and praised her aunt's kindness, and that of the clergyman ; and condemned her ingratitude and revolt. Finally, they declared their intention of being even more severe,

adding that they would exact from her a complete submission to their every desire...

Maud had replied, with some impatience, and in a loud voice, that she only regretted one thing : not to have been able to publicly disgrace the lascivious vicar, and claim the protection of the law. As for themselves, none of their sermons would have the least effect upon her.

"Indeed ?" asked Miss Evelyn. "I am persuaded of the contrary ; and before two days have passed, my dear child, you will be mentioning the names of your aunt and the vicar in yours prayers !"

"Never !" cried Maud.

"We will see. To begin with, I cannot endure ingratitude and rudeness ; so, Maud, darling, you will be whipped for it ; and will even prepare yourself for the punishment !... Kneel down upon that chair !..."

Pale, but resolute, Maud retreated to the far end of the room, and stood with her back to the wall, defiantly, like a little panther at bay. Miss Mabel stood silently behind Miss Neakes. The latter then went over to a drawer, unlocked it, and drew out a switch. Then she said to the girl, in a calm voice :

"I admise you to do as you are told. Kneel down upon that chair ! And lift up your skirts, so that I will whip you"

Maud made no reply. Mad with rage, she was

absolutely desesperate, and ready for anything.

"Then your atitude is decided, dear child ? You intend to defend yourself "unguibus et rostro ?" May the will of the Lord be accomplished, in this little affair between us !".

She made a sign to Miss Mabel, who bounded towards her, and seized her wrists. In the twinkling of an eye, and in spite of the desperate kicks which she gave her mistress' legs, her wrists were dragged behind her, and she found herself thrown face downwards on the floor. In a trice, she was bound hand and foot.

That done, Miss Mabel sat upon the girl's shoulders, crushing Maud with her weight, and stifling and blinding her with her skirts Miss Evelyn then knelt down, bending over the part of the body destined to receive punishment.

As was usual with Miss Neakes' refined method as a flagellante, the correction began with a good smacking, — one which was prolonged until the Headmistress' hand was tired. After that, the big switch was used...

Mad with pain, impotent rage, and fear, fainting under Miss Mabel's weight, Maud had to submit to such a long and terrible whipping to which those formerly given her by her aunt seemed like caressess...

Then, arrived at a certain pitch of suffering,

Maud fainted. The cruel women, perceiving her sudden immobility, stopped whipping.

When she recovered consciousness, Maud found herself lying on bed, face downwards, her feet and hands attached to the four bed-post. Beside her stood Miss Mabel, holding a glass of Porto wine. Raising the girl's head, she made her take some ; and the wine revived the poor victim somewhat. But, alas, such a favour had only been given in order to help Maud to endure further chastisement !... For just then, Miss Evelyn, who had left the room for a moment, returned, carrying a bowl of salt.

The girl felt utterly exhausted. An intense heat suffused her body, and the naked part of her that had been whipped was itching and stinging intolerably. She felt, — as I have described myself as feeling — as if an immense coating of lead was spread over her posterior.

Miss Evelyn, placing the bowl of salt between Maud's legs, said to Miss Mabel :

" Well, we have done the thing thoroughly, this time !"

"She has a very tender skin", said Miss Mabel, "and it is all torn and broken ! I've never seen anyone bleed quite so rapidly, before !"

"Well, child ?" asked Miss Noakes ironically. "And how do you like my treatment ? Are you still as obstinate and proud as ever ?"

"No !..." sobbed the poor girl, more dead than alive ; and shaking and quivering with fright.

"You are still of the same resolution, about — ?"

"No !... No... I will not say that again !"

I hope not ! But in order to make the impression you have just received a lasting one, I am going to put a finishing touch — litterally ! — on my work. You must tell me what you think of it !..."

Then the most abominable of torments began for poor Maud who was bound, and incapable of resistance. As if the switch, even, had not worked sufficient havoc with the skin, Miss Evelyn revived all the acuteness of the suffering, striking the girl severely, over the whole of the surface. with a horsehair brush, every hair of which was like a stiff steel pin, which pricked the sore flesh until the blood came. Again that terrible heat stole slowly over her body, and the blood, rising slowly at first, broke into a little stream, and trickled over the hips and down the tighs.

Then Miss Evelyn plunged her hand into the bowl of salt, and drew it out full,—her right hand... Then she brought it down smashingly upon the sore, bleeding, martyred flesh.

Maud began to yell. But she yelled in vain. Miss Evelyn went on smacking until the salt covered the whole surface ; and then, not con-

tent with that, she emptied the whole of the basin on the posterior, and began to spread it about... The blood absorbed the salt, slowly...

The two torturers then retired, leaving poor Maud alone for a short time, to bet, yell, plead, curse, and pray for death to come to her. To suffer desperately and alone, with no hope of escaping,—forsaken and abandoned.

Then they returned. Miss Mabel was carrying a sponge, and a jug of water.

"We are come to set you free, if you deservet it !" cried Miss Evelyn. "Do you promise me, —do you swear to me—a complete and absolute submission ?"

"Yes ! Yes ! Dear Miss Neakes !... Forgive me !"

"And you will do what I told you ? You will pray for your aunt and her husband every day ?"

"Yes, dear Miss Neakes".

"Good. Remember this punishment ; and if it seems severe to you know that if you omit to fulfil your promise, yournext punishment will be even worse !... And now, when you are in a fit to go there, I will lead you to your cell ; and there, between the three whippings a day which Miss Mabel and I will give you, you will have time to meditate upon your faults, and make good resolutions for the future !"

So saying, she ordered Miss Mabel to unloose

the victim. Then she set down the jug of water in the middle of the floor, and took Maud under her arm, as if she were going to spank her once again. But she only bathed Maud's posterior copiously afterwards powdering and lotioning her. (Just, in fact, as she did for me later).

Although her sufferings were still very terrible, Maud felt slightly more relieved by these attentions. She could now walk a little, though painfully, it is true. Then Miss Evelyn and Miss Mabel each took an arm of her, and they went down to the basement. There not far from the kitchen, and at the end of a long, dark corridor, Maud was pushed into a dark little cell, into which light only came for a moment or so, when the door was opened !

How musty it smelt ! And the walls were wet with the damp. The floor was cemented, and the whole furniture consisted of a massive oaken bench, without a back to it,—and a stool. Two trusses of straw were heaped up in a corner, unbound ; and over these four woollen coverings were carefully folded one on top of the other. About the walls, and in the floor, iron rings were attached. Maud soon devined the sinister significance of their presence !... She was in her cell.

Three times a day, either Miss Evelyn or Miss Mabel, accompanied by the huge big cook whom

I have already described, brought Maud her meal, which was always the same, and consisted of a large slice of bread, a piece of very strong chesse, and a little jug of water. As soon as they entered they bade the girl kneel down on the bench and recite a kind of Grace especially suited to the circumstances. Then the short prayer finished, she was made to stretch herself along the bench, while Miss Neakes, at the extreme end of it, leaned over the victim and held up her skirts for the big cook to smak vigorously. And smack vigorously she did, for her large hands were as big as butter-churners !

This whipping was, according to Maud's docility at the time, one of eighteen to thirty-six blows. She was obliged, too, to eat her meal under the eyes of the two mistresses,—even, when she was nos hungry at all. She ate slowly, because she simply hated cheese. In fact it was just for that very reason that they gave it to her,—and made it as trong as possible ! Sometimes terrible, repugnant things happened which, though Maud told me all about them, I really could not repeat here, because of the disgust they raise in my mind, and would raise in the mind on anyone else... But whatever happened, the meal had to be eaten,—all of it.

When it was over, Maud stretched herself along the bench again ; her skirts were raised

as before ; and she received much the same kind of punishment, save that it would be a worse one had she shown any reluctance in eating her dinner. The first whipping was the "hors d'œuvres", and the second the "dessert" And all thas was done three times a day !

During the intervals she had nothing to do, save to meditate upon her misfortunes, and their cause. She was not allowed to undo the coverings, and lie down upon the straw to sleep.

One day, Miss Mabel actually suspended her by the wrists to the iron rings fastened to the wall. Then she undressed her completely, and whipped her until the blood came. This went on for about twenty minutes... And after this had happened, Maud was completely "broken in".

She used to pace her prison floor until she grew so weary that she tired herself out, and would sleep heavily and dreamlessly until dawn came. Then and then only, she forgot all her troubles ; and she would look forward to that...

This terrible period of existence lasted for a fortnight ; and when Maud left the cell she left her old self behind her. She was now all that ber mistresses could desirs. She submitted to everything with the docility of a little dog who fears the whip, and cringes because he gets it often, and for nothing. She received the brutal favours of the two women ; but this did not

prevent her from being whipped by them frequently and hard. On the contrary... She had to listen, in private, to the unctuous sermons of the Reverent Mr. Stephen Grant ; and to endure the long and intimate "examinations" of Doctor Sharp. And in the end, she became what we all became, sooner or later,—spies upon each other, zealous spies, denouncing in hate as soon as we perceived the slightest occasion for doing so. Doing anything, in fact, which would abate the rigour of our discipline, and win for us a kind word, or a smile,—or even the calm, grateful placidity of neglect.

Many of the girls, too, denounced out of pure pleasure, loving to see their companions whipped and humiliated. Maud then confided to me that she had denounced me, that day, for speaking through the hole in the wooden partition ; and that was why Miss Neakes had punished me so cruelly. That was why, too, Maud had been let of the cell, and the bread and cheese, and the six daily whippings which invariably accompanied this spartan farn. All for having so zealously denounced me !

But I bore her no grudge for this ; and never even paid her back in her own coin. For I loved her too tenderly to bear malice. Yet her friendship, so apparently tender and true, was never proof against the pleasure of helping to get me whipped, and seeing it done.

CHAPTER VII

Miss Briggs. Miss Mabel's cruelty. I let myself go, — and am taken ! Total collapse

The time passed quickly away, and I had by this time thoroughly mastered the English language. I was quite accustomed to life at Birch Villa ; and almost equally with Ellen, I was the favourite with both mistresses. Of course this strange kind of education had changed and demoralized me. How could it have been oherwise ? My moral sense became deformed ; and I now praised as meritorious acts which I should formerly have despised. I denounced my companions, and they me. My moral sense was numb, and my physical senses served abjectly, my mistresses. But although my obedience was complete and unquestioning, yet I always felt that terrible shame and humiliation, whenever I was whipped ; and because of that, I always resisted its coming, and begged and

wept for it to be spared me. The flagellants looked for this, and liked it. They would have been far more furious with me if I had made no protest, for there would have been nothing left to tame.

About that time, there was a rage for giving practical household instruction to girls at school ; for if it were good to give them a scientific and general education, it would also be good for them, in their own interests, and that of a possible future family, to teach them practical and theoretical domestic economy. Miss Evelyn took up the idea with enthusiasm, and it became her pet obsession. So, neglecting our classical studies somewhat, we had to frequent the kitchen and the laundry. Miss Mabel taught us sewing and knitting, crochetting, and the elements of cutting out ; and she also supervised us when Miss Briggs, the big cook, initiated us into the mysteries of sauces and omelettes.

As may be imagined, these occasions were easily made use of for the purpose of inflicting punishment. The fact that none of us, up to that time, could hold or thread a needle, make even, straight stitches, told very much against us. Miss Mabel accused us of deliberate stupidity,—for no one, she said, could be so stupid without helping it—inattention, and laziness ; and whippings began to rain down upon us every five minutes. But as it interfered with a

pupil's work to be always undressed, whipped, and then dressed again. Miss Mabel was forced to moderate her anger. Finally she hit upon a splendid idea,—for herself. She made us take off our drawers for the sewing-lesson, so that she could get at us more easily ! Finally she improved even on this, making us sit down naked, as regards the seat, upon the cold wooden benches, with our skirts pinned up behind us ! ! ! Never could I have believed such a thing possible, and the shame of it was terrible to me. This was one of the most extraordinary of my many experiences.

Yet another invention belonged to Miss Mabel. It was this : at the end of every three whippings, the guilty girl, instead of sitting down again, remained kneeling, and went on with her work. Such a position was fatiguing in the extreme, both to nerves and body, for her posterior was in such a position that the whip might have descended upon it at any moment, and without warning. The ruler was most feared,— a long, thick, black ruler, of bog oak,— heavy and polished. And when it struck it left a long memory behind it. It fell to my lot to lie down several times, and to kneel in this terrible position. As Miss Mabel had said, my body seemed to be destined for the whip. Many and many a time, bending over to examine my work, she would say :

" Come, come, Françoise ! Aren't you downright ashamed of yourself for doing such work as this... This stitch is much too large... Here, you have not caught the cloth at all... This one is too small... Really, one would almost think that you did it on purpose !... Do you want to have another whipping ? You are a regular subscriber to such entertainments !... Do you, pray ?".

"Dear Miss Mabel !" I would cry out, terrified.

"Why do you work so adly, you naughty little girl ?".

"I don't know... I did n't know... But I will do it better... you will see".

"Can you do it better, may I ask ?".

"Yes ! Yes, dear Miss Mabel".

"You give yourself away, then, Françoise ; for if you can do better if you want to, you have no excuse. Lean over the bench !".

"Oh, Miss Mabel !... Dear Miss Mabel !".

"Lean over, please !".

I leaned over, sobbing. Miss Mabel kept me in this humiliating position, one hand pressed on my neck, while the other gave me half a dozen cuts with the razor, on my seat.

"And now", she finished, "let me see you work with a good will !".

Bathed in tears I started my sewing again, we spent two long hours doing that, and two long hours in the kitchen.

There we all put on white aprons, which covered us from shoulders to feet. Miss Mabel, with a discipline stuck in her belt, corrected us in the usual way, when we made mistakes ; and sometimes she delegated her powers to Miss Briggs, who generally used her big red hands, though she did not disdain such things as the skimmer, the knife board, the broom, or the small wet mop used for rinsing out dishes !

To me,a whipping given by Miss Briggs counted as a double one. First of all because of her coarse brutality and then because of her being an inferior. I loathed being held in the grip of this virago, with her greasy fade, whose fat body gloated over us, as she held us, smacked us, and hated us for our opinion of her, and for looking down on her. Ugh ! The hatefulness of her squat nose, and quivering flesh,—like a black jelly !... The toad !...

One day, a day of ill omen for myself, everything seemed to conspire against the peace of my poor posterior. In the morning I had received six strokes of the discipline in order to make me hasten my toilette, In class I had had two whippings, and a kucklerapping with the ruler. I had also been put on my knees in the corner. In the refectory I was given dry bread and water,—and a whipping to finish up with ; and during recreation I earned several smacks. During the sewing-lesson, I was thrice whipped,

made to kneel down, and punished with the long ruler. And at last the cookery lesson arrived. I had never been whipped so much before; and had been in tears all the morning,—so much so that they had almost hollowed out a channel in my cheeks !

Miss Briggs had untertaken to teach me to make a cherry tart. At first,all went well. I made the pastry, buttered the mould, and prepared to stone the cherries.

"Above all", said Miss Briggs, "don't spoil or crush the cherries. The stone should come out cleanly, without tearing the skin. Think of a hen laying an egg, and you will see what I mean".

Miss Briggs often made such strange comparisons... However, I did my best, or thought I did, to oblige her ; but either because I was upset by my recent whippings, or because my young imagination wandered,—as often happens in the case of girls—I could not do what she said. My hands became juice all over, and many a cherry had I broken when I had done, though I hid the damage as best I could, placing each cherry in a position where it would show to advantage.

Then Miss Briggs, who had been inspecting Ellen's work, came over to me, and found me out ! She burst out laughing, and took my right ear between her fat finger and thumb.

"Goodness gracious me !" she cried. "Did one ever see such a mess ?... Dirty little girl !... And tried to hide her careless work, too !... what does she deserves for her carelessness, idleness and stupidity, Miss Mabel ?".

"A severe whipping, of course !".

I trembled, joined my hands entreatingly, and stammered out, between my tears :

"Oh, please forgive me, dear Miss Briggs ! Just this once... I have been whipped so much to-day !".

And you deserve it, so why complain ? " said the big cook. It is your own fault, Françoise, as you know quite well. Come ! Stop these grimaces and excuses ; bring the cream skimmer over here ; and then come in between my legs, for Briggs to cook your delicate little flesh for you !".

To my shame I say it, but I fell on my knees in front of that virago, and clasped her feet, — begging and imploring her pity ; promising to do better ; and weeping bitterly... But she only laughed at me as if I had been a child, and told me to hurry up.

Then, raising me to my feet, and with one of her coarse red hands clutching my hair, she bent me under her, with my head under her armpit, and her great thighs closing in on mine... I fell on my knees again ; but she let me stay there, while she bound my wrists, tying

them to my sides. Then she raised my skirts ; and, one of my companions having passed her the greasy skimmer, began to beat me, — crying out as she did so :

"Ah ! Ah !... So you wanted to deceive old Miss Briggs, did you ? Well, my pretty Miss Françoise, you will just find out how much you gave to pay for the privilege !"

Flac ! Flac ! Flac ! Flac ! The horrible thing fell furiously upon the soft, fleshly parts of my body, and each blow left the mark of a little red circle dotted with white centres. It was terrible, for the skimmer was of wrought iron, and very heavy. Each time that anyone was beaten with it, the flesh began to swell so that the skin remained sore for a long time afterwards.....

Miss Briggs whipped for such a long time that I thought I should faint if she continued much longer. And at last, when I had not the strength left to make a single moan, she stopped.

"There !" she cried, letting me go, "And I suppose you will be none too ready to begin again, will you, Miss Françoise ?"

"I hope not", put in Miss Mabel, "I notice that her posterior is exceptionally red and swoollen. If I took her to the doctor he would certainly prescribe a little blood-letting for her... I have a good mind to save him the trouble, and give it to her myself !"

I began to tremble convulsively from head to foot. I knew what this meant ! I knew... My voice shook, and finally broke down altogether, as I fell on my knees before her, imploring her to spare me. As if she would — or could, perhaps !...

Smiling diabolically, and shaking like a jelly with fat joy and silent lauthter, Miss Briggs took me under her arm again, holding me stoutly, my posterior still exposed. Then Miss Mabel came to me. In her hand she held a a little knife, — a pretty silver one, which I had often seen in her room when she used to invite me to go and see her for a short time ; and which I used to be ordered to use, sometimes, for pedicure purposes ! (Yes, we were reduced even to that...) Not that those purposes were the only we were required to attend to... There were others...

Suddenly one of Miss Mabel's cold hands descended upon my burning flesh. And then came a sharp, icy cold pain, and a little tear... Then I felt someting hot tickling me, and running along my thighs. It was my blood, flowing !

I began to yell, desperately, terrified that she would let me bleed to death... And — who knows — but for the Law... But I dare not, will not think that...

For my yelling I receiving a few extra smac-

kings ; and then the blade sank more deeply into my soft flesh...

Six times more, Miss Mabel did this. Maud told me, afterwards, that her face had been terrible to contemplate, while she had been performing the operation, — especially at the moment when she had sunk in the blade... She was pale and ground her teeth. Her eyes gleamed behind her glasses, and her nostrils dilated and quivered with terrible sensuality Strange and terrible sight, — a passion for mingled flagellation and — blood lust !

That she found an immense intense pleasure in martyrizing me thus, I never for a moment doubted. Moreover, whenever I went to her room, and she took me in her arms, she always managed under some pretext or other, either to whip me, or to scold me in such a way and to such an extent, that my tears flowed. It was then that her transports of tenderness, — or what she said was tenderness, as I believed it to be then — were the most ardent. She literally drank in my tears, her real joy alway consisting in seeing me suffer morally and physically, Yet all that did not prevent me from being drawn towards her with equal attraction, I was then masochistic, and loved to suffer at the hands of a more dominant personality than myself. Many women are like that ; and a few men, too, perhaps from

some unhappy ancestor, inherit the slave instinct. I gave myself rep to her, body and soul and heart, — in spite of the frequent whippings that I received. No... Because of them !...

Yet, on that day, I thought that everything had its limits, and that I had reached mine. For the way she was treating me was so cruel and abnormal that I revolted, and as the old proverb says, "twined like a worm". Life is sweet to the young ; and, if I must confess the truth, I was "scared". I was faint and sick, bruised and sore ; and, my nerves being past breaking-point, I yelled like the devil in a font of Holy water,and called Miss Mabel such names, that the other girls stood round, terrified. Even Miss Briggs stood quaking, wondering what kind of expiation I would have to make for such an outrage.

Furious, Miss Mabel had let me go, and stood dumbfounded. I stood with my hands on my hips, red with anger, and my hands smeared with blood... She said to me at length, — when she could :

"Is it you, Françoise, who are speaking to me like this ?"

"Yes", I said resolutely. "It is horrible to be ceaselessly whipped for small trifles ; but what you have just done is the limit ! You are a micked woman ! I wont't stay here any longer, either ! I'll go away. I'll shout, if you touch me

again. I'll scream the place down I'll go to Law !... I..."

"Miss Briggs ! Hold her tight", said Miss Mabel. "I will be back in a minute. You others, come along. It is time for your recreation".

This was not true. It was not the time for recreation... But everyone understood that Miss Mabel simply wished to get rid of everybody so that she might punish me at her ease...

Miss Briggs now held me crushed tightly against her. She spoke to me mouth to mouth ; and the shadowy moustache which covered her upper lip, ticked my check from time to time. Then she said to me :

"I think, my pretty little Miss Francoise, that you have let yourself in for it, this time ! Good Heavens ! What a fuss to make about such a little matter !... But the young girls of to-day complain about nothing at all. In my day, they put up with a great deal, — and never even complained, or thought of complaining "!

I sobbed with rage, stiffening my body to resist the contact of this odious great woman, who dared to compare herself to me !... But by a great effort of will power I managed to control myself, and say nothing. Besides, my anger had now fallen away from me, and I was afraid... terribly, desperately afraid of what I had done. I was as cold as death, all over.

Miss Briggs, heaving a doleful sigh, continued :

"Now if you had been, as I was put to an old-fashioned Charity School, you would know better than to do as you are doing now".

"But, Miss Briggs", I gasped, "you could not have been worse whipped there than we are here. That's impossible !"

"Impossible ?" she cried, "why, this is nothing in comparison. A mere flea-bite !... My body was nearly always covered in blood, — or else covered with wounds and scars. And not only the posterior, but the back, arms, and legs, breasts, abdomen, — every part, every part... And it wasn't as if we only had the whip to reckon with, for there were a thousand other things !... Oh, I know that it is impossible to bring up young girls without the whip ; and it certainly was not spared in my case. Still, when I see what good results it had upon my character, I am forced to conclue that it is the best method of correction and improvement that I know of. That being so, I do not hesitate to inflict it on others, to the best of my ability. You saw that just now, din't you ?"

I tried vainly to escape from her ; but she held me very tightly, and, moved by some strange feeling which I could not fathom, kissed me so gluttonously that I was nearly sick !...

Just then Miss Mabel entered.

She came forwards slowly holdingup her skirts

with her usual air of careful, severe dignity ! She came to me, and took my hands in hers. Then, sitting down in an armchair, she dragged me against her, — my legs against her knees.

I was crying silently, my head bent. Beside us stood the big cook, with her sleeves rolled up above the elbow, and her hands on her hips.

Miss Mabel said to me, in a calm. grave voice :

"Why did you speak to me like that, Françoise ?"

"Oh, pardon, dear Miss Mabel !" I cried. "I was out of my mind, almost. I was beside myself ! I did not know what I was saying... ».

"You absolutely dumbfounded me. After what you had so often said to me, — after all your apparent tenderness, and submission to all your deserved corrections, — your moderate and gentle corrections, too, I am bound to say, — I thought that you were really sincerely fond of me, and devoted to me. I see that I have made a mistake...".

"Oh, dear Miss Mabel, no !... Forgive me !".

"I forgive you, — certainly, Françoise, and with all my heart. Do you imagine for one moment that I would harbour any thought of vengeance ? My conscience tells me that I have acted only for your good. Your body, to-day, was feverish, and there was a great deal of congestion. I therefore thought that you needed to be

bled a little, for the sake of your health. Ah, Françoise ! Ah yet, in spite of it all, I could open my arms to you, and press you to my heart !"

And as she spoke, she opened her arms. I fell into them, sobbing with frenzied emotion, and mad passion.

Miss Mabel gently disengaged herself from my clasp, kissed me very tenderly, and then took my hands in hers once again. She went on :

"There, darling... That is how I really love you, you see... I have let you read my heart, for once",

I had never seen Miss Mabel like that before. She seemed to be quite another person, soft, womanly, loving...

But why, at that critical juncture, did I happen to catch the eye of Miss Briggs ? For she was smiling ironically, as she looked down on the scene ; and something seemed to amuse her very much... My heart slowly began to sink...

"I should" continued Miss Mabel, "have liked to send you away to play with your companions, — saying simply to you : "Go, Françoise ! And learn from henceforth that your mistress loves you that her intentions are always for your good ? But,—well, there is a "but", you see..."

Oh, the cruel woman? Little by little she was throwing off the mask, and ceasing to act apart!... I ought to have known that she would act one, and talk like this, Had I no seen her doing it so often ?... She felt my hands trembling in her own ; and said :

"What is the matter with you ?,.. And why should your loving mistress frighten you ?... You must be calm and brave, Françoise, and when you have been proved guilty you must logically know that you must expiate... Well, this is the "but" at which I left off : But you have insulted your mistress in the presence of vour fellow pupils, and a servant ; and for this crime against discipline, you must be punished !"

"But, dear Miss Mabel", I stammered, you-you said that you would forgive me !..,"

"And I repeat it, my dear child. I, your friend, forgive you with all my heart. But the outraged mistress must punish. In me there are two separate and distinct individuals. Cannot you see the distinction !"

A that time I did not know of that casuistic distingo. I only understood that, at that moment, Miss Mabel was a consummate hypocrite ; and that she was playing with me as a cat plays with a mous before devouring it... I began to weep desperately.

But, as I have said, Miss Mabel fascinated me in the extreme ; and now she had assumed her

softest and most wheedling voice, explaining at length why I must be punished ; and saying :

I was good enough to send away your companions, so that their presence might not add to your humiliation. If, therefore, you wish to lighten your punishment, be obedient, submissive, and sensible. Humiliate yourself to the utmost before me ; and you will find your punishmend easier to bear.... And know kneel down, and ask me humbly to punisch you as you deserve. Tell me, too, how sorry you are for the act which you have committed".

The ambiguous way in which she said all this led me to believe that she really meant to spare me the full rigour of my correction, which I knew was going to be a severe one ; so I knelt down, clasped my hands together, and said, in a broken and tearful voice, all that was required of me.

"Good !" exclaimed my mistress. "And now you may get up, my child".

Her voice was softer and more gentle than ever... I obeyed mechanically.

"Come here... kneel down upon this chair!

"Dear Miss Mabel !..." I implored.

"Tut, tut. You know quite well, Françoise, that you have just promised to be sbedient and sensible. Unless you want to spoil the good effect of that promise, do not forget that you made it".

I knelt down upon the chair...

"Miss Briggs", said Miss Mabel softly, "you have cords?"

"Yes, Miss".

The big cook waddled over to a drawer of the dresser, and drew out a bundle of them, which she held out to Miss Mabel.

"Join your hands together, Françoise, and hold them out to me".

I obeyed. My mistress bound my wrists together firmly, tying one end of the cord to the bottom back rung of the chair.

"Now try and bring your arms back again... you can't, eh ?... You have stretched them too far ?"

"Yes... dear Miss... Mabel".

"Good. And now, as to make it absolutely impossible for you you to get up I will put the other end of the cord round your neck and round the same rung of this chair... There ! You can't raise your head now, can you ?"

"No !... Dear Miss Mabel... Forgive me !..."

"Yes, my child. Now I am going to tie your ankles... and your waist... and your feet, one to the other"

She then raised my skirts in order to pass the cord under my knees ; and this operation, accompanied by much tickling, squeezing and pinching, was the first, and not the least hard part of my "correctiou"... Then at last I was trussed and bound, — so securely that it was impossi-

ble for me to make a single movement to defend myself.

"Take up your clothes, now", said Miss Mabel, "and expose your plump offending posterior, which is still rebel to my authority. My dear Briggs, bring me a sponge soaked in hot — very hot — brandy, so that I may be able to dry the blood, clean the parts, and detect the marks of the blood-letting".

The cook turned the tap on in the sink, and the boiling water fell foaming into a small basin, in which lay a coarse sponge. I could observe all these preparations my face being turned towards the kitchen range. I could see Miss Mabel dip her little finger into the water, and take it out hastily.

"Well ?", asked Miss Briggs, who was holding the basin, "is it hot enough ?".

"It is", replied Miss Mabel, with laconic significance.

Miss Briggs thereupon smiled, showing her long yellow teeth. But Miss Mabel took up the sponge, after she had squeezed a little of the water out into the basin, and applied it to my body.

I think I must have given a terrible, strident yell, as I twisted my body about as if I were in the agonies of death : for the water was almost boiling !

Without paying the slightest attention to me,

Miss Mabel bathed me silently, washing away all the clots and traces of blood from my seat. The burning was horrible in the extreme, for my skin was almost raw. In fact it was two days since I had been able to sit down at all. Of course there were other causes besides this. But I do not wish to speak of them, or of any but that which concerns my poor tortured posterior.

"The bathing" process was over at last.

"That's good !" cried Miss Mabel. "And now your back view is pleasant to look upon,—as fresh and rosy as that of a baby !... None of its proportions squeezed out of place, or defaced, either... Briggs, please heat the poker at once... Françoise, my dear, listen to me attentively. The moment of your supreme punishment has come. I say to you once again, it is not your friend, your dear and tender fried, Mabel, who is going to hurt you. It is your devoted and true mistress, who must do her duty, for your good, and the honour of discipline, and the school... you reproached me,—stupidly you admitted it to me yourself—for having cut into your skin with my little knife. Well, darling, in order to satisfy and appease you, I am going to close up these little incisions with a cauterization !... Is the iron nice and hot, Briggs ?"

"Here it is, Miss !"

I believed that my last hour had come, and began to yell like a pig being stuck. Oh, what

had the whipping been, the blows, smacks, cuts with a penknife,—even the application of boiling water,—compared to the agony of the red-hot iron, applied to each one of my wounds ?... Six times Miss Mabel touched me with it. I writhed so, that the cords cut into my flesh, through my stockings, and against my neck... And then, just before the end of it all, and at what I thought would be death for me,—at the ninth application of the red-hot iron—I mercifully lost consciousness, escaping from the cruel sufferings, the agony of agonies...

I awoke, and found myself in the infirmary, lying face downwards upon my bed. My body had been carefully bandaged ; and for the next two days, Miss Mabel herself came to nurse me. The third day I got up. The fourth day I was almost cured. And the fifth day, being downstairs in the classroom late for class, I received from the abbess—like hands of Miss Evelyn, a smacking which assured me, as well as herself, that my posterior was definitely cured !

CHAPTER VIII

I make the acquaintance of the Dark Cell. Miss Evelyn and Miss Mabel come to break me in. The "damp" straw and the whip. Eight days of hell. I come back to the light.

Miss Mabel's intense and unsurpassed cruelty —she only fell short of actually killing me—for what had been, after all, but a natural revolt on my part—aroused my deepest indignation and undying rancour. (Or so I thought). And in the days that followed my torture, I tried to show her, by my coldness, that I was no longer the dupe of her casuistic "distinctions". But this was a difficult thing to do, for I risked my skin a thousand times over,—and many times I was the loser by it.

One evening Miss Evelyn summoned me to her room. I prepared to obey, in fear and trembling, for it was only for some very grave fault that one was called to see the Head mistress,—

unless one happened to be one of her great favourites !... But this was not so in my case, since Miss Mabel had done me... the honour to choose me for herself.

The Headmistress, whose statuesque and classical figure was clothed in black velvet, looked very imposing to me. She drew me towards her, and then sat down, making me sit on a footstool at her feet.

"I know, Françoise", she began, "that during the last few days Miss Mabel found herself obliged to punish you very severely, as the result of insubordination on your part,—insubordination, more over, which was shown publicly, in the presence of your school companions. Is this true ?"

"Yes, dear Miss Neakes", I replied, with tears in my voice.

"I see... Now, since that punishment, you have been guilty of a cold indifference towards your mistress,—or, at least, she and I believed this to be so. Are we making a mistake, or is this so ? Do you bear Miss Mabel any ill will ?"

I could not restrain my tears, though I made no reply. I dared not tell either a lie, or the truth. Miss Evelyn continued :

"You need not fear, my dearest child. Confide in me. I will be able to cure you of this little feeling, should it exist, for I do not like to see a pupil of whom I am fond harbouring any de-

testable and malicious thought against a good and devoted mistress, who loves her, too, with all her heart... You may think that Miss Mabel has been severe ; but I tell you that she has acted in your best interests... Speak, my child".

Then, sobbing, I confessed to Miss Evelyn that I had not yet found it in my heart to pardon Miss Mabel for her cruelty towards myself.

"I know", I said,—coward that I was !— "that punishments are necessary. The whip, to begin with, is... is very hard... but to burn sore flesh with a red-hot iron ceases to be a punishment, and becomes the act of a savage !"

Hardly were the words out of my mouth than I had already regretted them. But it was too late. For putting aside the curtains behind which she had been hiding, Miss Mabel appeared before my startled eyes. She and Miss Evelyn turned to each other for consolation.

"My poor, dear Mabel !" exclaimed Miss Neakes. "See what a little serpent we have been harbouring here, and trying to do good to !"

"Indeed, yes indeed..."

"Do you think that, in spite of all this, we can do any good with the child ?"

"I think so, Miss Neakes. I know her very well ; and her heart is not so hard as it seems to be. Yes, I think that there is still time to beget a better spirit in this obstinate, misguided Françoise !... Good Heavens ! when I only cor-

rect my pupils in order to develop their characters, and earn their gratitude !... Well, there is only one way to bring her to reason. She must be punished even more severely,—punished in such a way that she will never, never forget it... The memory of such a correction will prevent her from ever afterwards committing a folly"

"Very well", said Miss Neakes. "Then, to come to details, dear Mabel,—what to you propose ?"

The young mistress was silent for a moment, reflecting,—or appearing to reflect. And I, still crying, my heart heavy within me, waited for the sentence passed by that pale mouth...

"I propose the Dark Cell", said Miss Mabel, at length. "It was very successful in the case of Maud , so let us hope that it will do Françoise good. We can but try".

"The Dark Cell,—with the regime ?"

"Yes".

I thought of what Maud had told me concerning Maud's forced meals, and the daily whippings...

Miss Neakes continued :

"Maud's case... Ah, yes, She was only on half-regime, wasn't she?"

"Yes. But I think the full rigour of it ought to be given to Françoise", said Miss Mabel.

Good Heavens ! whatever was going to become of me ! Whatever was I going to suffer ?

When Maud had told me about what she went through, I had trembled with horror; and now I was going to endure double what she had!...

"When shall we take her to the dark cell?" asked Miss Neakes.

"Why, at once, if you consent".

"Have you got the nettles?"

"Yes, Miss Neakes. I had them gathered by one of the scullery maids, foreseeing that this occasion would arise".

"Good. Now, Françoise", said Miss Evelyn, taking me by the hand, "follow us, — we are going to try and save you in spite of yourself, — to save your soul".

"Miss Neakes! Oh, dear Miss Neakes!" I cried, trying to detain her. "Please don't do that... Not the Dark Cell!... Forgive me. Do with me what you will. But not that... Have pity on me..."

"I warn you, my little friend", said Miss Evelyn very sweetly, "that if you attempt to resist us in any way whatsoever, you will remain in the cell so long, and will be so often whipped, that your posterior will become horny all over!... And then, you will have another taste of the Red Hot Iron!..."

"I am following... oh, dear Miss Evelyn!... Pardon! I'm coming, I'm coming..."

I hardly knew what I was saying. But I had clearly shown them that I feared the thought of

the Dark Cell, thus making them at once decide in favour of the thing I loathed. Ah, I would have to get to be a great deal cleverer before I could hope to outwit them !

Miss Mabel then took me by the hand, as well.

"Now darling", she said, "we are going to take you to your place of punishment".

We walked in silence down long corridors and deserted staircases ; and then I recognized the cell which Maud häd described to me... We entered it, — I, still crying, and tortured by the thoughts which my imagination conjured up,— my two mistress as calm as if they were taking a peaceful walk in the country.

Miss Mabel lit two lamps, which were fixed to the wall by brackets.They were oil lamps, manufactured with special burners,and supplied with "Matador" mantles ; and they gave out a very strong clear light. Thanks to them I was able to take stock of the place in which I was condemned to live, for how long ?...

The same furniture was there that Maud had had. I recognized it from her description. There were the wooden bench and stool. But through the rings in the walls and floor were hanging chains ; and Maud had said nothing about that... Then again, the seat of the stool was strangely shaped. Instead of being flat, or slightly hollowed in the centre, it was like a

long, narrow pyramid rising up... Surely one could not sit down on it, I thought to myself... There was, however, the pile of straw in a corner against the wall, and four coverings with which one could keep out the damp and cold of the cellar. I also saw a large earthenware jar with a wide neck, from which a number of dark green leaves protruded. I perceived, with terrified eyes, that they were the nettles about which Miss Mabel had spoken.

Miss Mabel then led me into the middle of the cell, while Miss Evelyn unrolled a cord hanging from the ceiling from a hook which was directly over my head.

"Undress yourself, Françoise!" commanded Miss Mabel.

"Miss Neakes! Dear Miss Neakes!" I implorod, holding out my clasped hands to her entreatingly. "Protect me, I beg you! In the name of God!"

"God wishes your punishment, my child. Obey Miss Mabell".

Full of despair and anguish, I turned back my skirts, as I had been accustomed to do before receiving the whip upon our bare flesh.

"No! No! Not like that!" cried Miss Mabel. "You know that I do not mean that! Take off your skirts, petticoats, bodice, corsets, chemise, drawers, shoes and stockings! Everything! Everything! Everything!"

The way in which she said it, sweeping everything tempestuously before her, was not to be gainsaid. Everything was useless save obedience. I obeyed... I undressed ; and yet I felt strangely fascinated at being naked in the presence of these two women.

As the floor was of ciment, my feet were as cold as ice. In order to warm them a little, I began to walk up and down. Miss Mabel smiled.

"Your feet are cold, Françoise !"

"Yes".

"Since when have you been taught to say just "Yes ?" said Miss Evelyn, giving me a sudden smack on my posterior which made me (and it) jump with surprise.

"Yes, dear Miss Mabel", I said meekly.

"Well, your feet won't be cold for long, my child", said Miss Mabel. "We will suspend them from the ground for you !"

And as she spoke, either by desing or by accident the iron hook over my head brushed across my hair...

"Give me your hands, Françoise. I am going to tie them tightly".

Weeping bitterly, I held them out. My turturess bound my two wrists together, so tightly that I cried with the pain of it. Then with the free end of the same cord she made a running knot, through which she passed the dangling

hook... And then it dawned upon me what she was about to do. I began to yell with terror, throwing all restraint to the winds, and throwing myself to one side in order to avoid what seemed to me to be unendurable.

But before I could move again, my wrists were knocked upwards, I was struck backwards; and suddenly I lost consciousness of anything save that my feet were off the ground: and that Miss Evelyn and here assistant were hauling me up and up... Until at last I hung there, high up, swinging and turning round and round... My poor wrists were feeling the weight of my body, or, to speak more literally, and to parody François Villon : (to whose shade I herewith make apology).

"The top of me held the "bottom" up!"

But, though I may joke now, when the horror is past and far away, it was a horrible moment. It gives me a certain pleasure to revive it in my thoughts, certainly; but there is no doubt that I suffered cruelly at the time. I even ask myself, now, how it was that I did not go mad!...

Even then, that was not all that I was destined to endure, for Miss Mabel and Miss Evelyn, having fixed the cord, came near me, and began to criticize me, giving me a slap on the ears or thighs, — anywhere they pleased, in fact — from time to time. They told me to

"keep my mouth shut", but for once, I could not obey ; and had they killed me for it, I should have had to cry out, so great was my suffering, and this the only way to bear it.

Miss Evelyn, who had never seen me completely naked, seemed to take great pleasure in touching, appraising, and sounding me, and in pinching my young, proud throat... But everything comes to an end; and so the two women rolled back their skirts, — pretty high, too, no doubt to be able to move about more freely — and began to put on a pair of leather gloves. That being done, they took the nettles out of the vase, dividing these between them. Then they came back to me, one standing on the right of me, and the other on the left.

Then, like a couple of furies let loose, they rained blows down upon me. The horrible hairy leaves, whose prickles seemed to burn into my skin, struck me on my cheeks, neck, shoulders, breasts, arms, thighs, and especially on my posterior. Nor were my legs and thighs spared, either ; and before long my heaving, quivering body was covered with great white bumps, surrounded by a sea of angry red flesh. Anyone might have thought me to be suffering from some horrible kind of disease ! The sight of my own body, as much of it as I could see, filled me with horror.

The whipping lasted for a long time,—an

eternity, it seemed to me. It only ceased when there was not a single leaf left upon the stalks ; and when the stalks themselves were bent and broken. Then the flagellants put me down again, and unloosed me.

At first I felt nothing, being numb with pain. Then the blood slowly crept back into the littlle capillaries, and I had "pins and needles" in my fingers. Then, I began to feel !...

Miss Mabel and Miss Evelyn silently contemplated my despair.

"Do you feel a little better now ?" said Miss Mabel.

I could have struck her where she stood. But I was in her power, and therefore at her mercy. What could I do ?

"Yes, dear Miss Mabel !..." I sobbed.

"I knew how efficacious it would be !" she cried. "And now you will kneel down,—still naked, if you please !".

I obeyed. Then Miss Evelyn, putting her elegantly shod little shoe forward, said :

"Kiss my foot, humbly !

I prostated my self, and place my lips to the firm, dictatorial little foot.

"And mine, too !" said Miss Mabel.

I kissed that, too ; and as I did so, a strange trouble feeling, that I well knew, took possession of me... Humiliation and sensuality were, in my case, inseparable, and linked together.

"Go and dress, now", said Miss Evelyn. "And be quick about it"

I hastened to obey. But putting on my clothes gave me a very strange sensation, caused by the friction against the skin, which revived all the sensations of nettle whipping, as well as those of humiliation.

When I was dressed, Miss Mabel led me towards a stool, and the straw ; and Miss Evelyn picked up a chain that was lying on the floor, one end of which was fastened to a ring in the wall. Miss Mabel fastened it to my right foot. Then she said.

"You will remain like this until me judge you to be sufficiently corrected. As for the rest of the "regime", well, you will soon know what it is !".

So saying, they both retired, leaving me alone with my suffering, shame, and despair.

That evening, Miss Neakes returned by herself, bearing a small tray on which was some water and a pice of black bread. I trembled when I saw her coming...

"Kneel down !" she ordered, "and repeat what I am going to say to you"

I remember being obliged to murmur a prayer in which I admitted myself to be unworthy of eating anything but black bread, or drinking anything else but water ; and I entreated my good mistress not to spare me, but to

give me all the punishment that she deemed necessary for my good,.. But that prayer was not addressed to God. It was addressed to her, at her "dictation", really...

She then put down the bread and water, and ordered me to approach.

I advanced, crying a little, and knowing what to expect. I made no protest, for that would have been worse than useless ; and taking me by the arm, and dragging me on to the straw, she swept back my skirts, and smacked me long and loudly. After that, I had to kneel down, and eat and drink before her... She hurried me, then, telling me that I took far too long a time over my meals. Then,—I know why she wanted me to hurry !—she said to me :

"Come and have your dessert, now !".

And I received it,—on the nicely polished table of my posterior !...

The next morning, Miss Mabel brought me my breakfast. She also brought a discipline ; and I received a dozen and a half strokes of it as "appetizers", and to "aid digestion".

This lasted for eight days. Sometimes I was whipped with rods, knotted cordes, or a hair-brush. Sometimes I was simply smacked. But oh, how I cried and wept, during that awful time !

Yet most people get accustomed to most things. And besides, I was always promised

my freedom as soon as I should have earned it... I became the most abject and hypocritical of creatures ; and yet nothing I could do seemed enough to "earn it"... After each whipping, I tenderly kissed the hand which had whipped me, dragging myself along on my knees behind the flagellante, kissing the hem of her dress,– entreating her to stay with me still,—to be near me, even though she were cruel to me, so that I could love her near as I had always loved her from afar... Yes, in a word, I learnt to be a clever comedienne ; and I found it pay to be, too ; for eight days of it was held to be enough for me, where as Maud had had to have fifteen !

And yet Maud had only been on "half rations !!!"

CHAPTER IX

A walk through the fields. Miss Mabel is inspired by Nature. Souvenirs of the walk.

The following spring I attained my eighteenth year, and school companions had come and gone. But there were always plenty of new girls to be found ; and if deemed to be "select" enough they were taken,—and stayed. In fact, the school had a very good name, as none of its pupils ever wanted to leave !

One day Miss Evelyn decided that we ought to go for a walk in the country. We accordingly set off, six of us, with Miss Mabel in charge.

We took the little white, sunny roads, which round in and out between field of green corn and flowering buckwheat ; and we rested in the shade of clumps of trees. Whenever we went out for these walks, Miss Mabel made us each make a birch rod from bundles of twigs. There were many very beautiful birch trees

about,—young ones, from which five twigs can easily be cut. Then we would come back in our ranks, two by two, our switches in our hands, —very much ashamed if we ever met a countryman or countrywoman on the way. For they would look at us, laughing when they saw us going along with handfuls of "whip fodder".

Our mistress never neglected an occasion for humiliating us. Sometimes she would address one of us, in a very loud, severe voice, so that anyone passing by could not fear to hear :

"Françoise ! You will come to my room after the walk, for me to give you a severe whipping !".

At such moments I always used to wish that I might die, and the earth open and swallow me. For the people passing used to stare so at me, and smile, and sneer, and whisper...

And sometimes, if one of us had been found unusually naughty, Miss Mabel would announce her intention of whipping her in front of the first person we saw. And she did it, too !... I particularly remember one day, when we met an elegant tilbury, in which were two young gentlemen, and a lady who was a near neighbour. As it happened, it was poer Jane whose destiny it was to be so chastised ; and as soon as the carriage came in sight, Miss Mabel took the girl under her arm, and said to her :

"Here is your chance! you are going to receive it,—where you know!".

And she began to whip violently, while the gentlemen, having perceived the thing from afar, hastened along, so that they might enjoy the sight.

They arrived just as it was finishing The gentleman who was driving saluted politely, his friend also raised his hat; and the lady bowed.

"Ah, my dear Miss Mabel!" he cried. "I see that your pupils manage to keep you very busy! But the "handfuls" are in good "hands"!

"And severe ones, too, I see!" smiled the lady.

Miss Mabel bowed, and said:

"Yes, they give me a great deal of trouble; but that does not daunt me for I am upheld by the thougt that my persistent efforts — — especially those relating to corporal punishment — will result in their improvement. Not one of them goes without her daily whipping — at least one — and Heaven alone knows how they deserve it!"

"We have no doubt of that! Accept our congratulations, dear Miss Mabel!"

Miss Mabel, the lady, and the two gentleman bowed to each other again. Then we went back to Birch Villa.

But I do not think that I ever suffered such another humiliation, in all my life!

CHAPTER X

Daily Examination of Conscience. Penances, fasting, Mortifications, Flagellations.

At the end of each month, the Reverend Stephen Grant assembled us in one of the large rooms, where he gave us a long sermon on penance, contrition, and all sorts of excellent things preached by these gentlemen, and not often practised.

The sermon ended, we knelt down for an hour or so, to meditate upon the sins which we had committed during the month, and while we were doing so the clergyman conferred with the Headmistress and her assistant. In order to lighten the conference, tea was indulged in ; and the clergyman, undervitalized by a persistent and weary cold, added a quantity of rum to his tea in order to cure himself as soon as possible !

When we had finished our meditations, we

passed one by one, in order of seniority, into the parlour, where we found ourselves alone with M. Grant. There, on our knees before him, we made pur examination of conscience out loud. We confessed to God (not to the vicar !...) all our sins being told that God used the vicar as His instrument, in order to show us that a virtuous life was of all others to be preferred.

This is how the clergyman carried out his duties.

He took us upon his knees, so that his words being spoken closer of our ears would reach our hearts bètter ! Then, while he sermonized us, he kept touching us on ail sides, and in all kinds of places. Finally he announced that in order to be washed white as snow from all our sins, we ought to be whipped. That he maintained, would make our repentance lasting and sincere... After that, he would lay us across his knee, and with remarkable deftness, give us a little whipping, — just enough to make our skin red, and draw tears from us... This latter part of it was an excuse for him to console us by kissing us tenderly, — so that, when we left him, we did not know whether to laugh or to cry, though we were overwhelmed with confusion, all the same.

We fasted on Fridays, — that is to say, the usual copious menu was slightly reduced on that day. Eventually, Miss Mabel proposed that

every girl who had been punished on Thursday should wear a hair shirt next the bare skin, exposed to view, on the Friday. This was done, Also, any whippings incurred upon this day of Penance were triple ones ; so you may imagine what trouble we took to be good on that day !... Yet, in spite of our best efforts, triple whippings rained down upon us, so to speak, greatly to the chagrin of our poor damaged posteriors !

On Friday evenings, too, the visits of the favourites to Miss Evelyn's room or Miss Mabel's room, were stopped. But that was more of a penance for our mistresses ; for we always had more to lose than to gain, in the course of those mysterious interviews about which, I repeat, it is impossible for me to speak. Fort they had very, very little to do with matters pedagogic. In fact, nothing at all.

CHAPTER XI

Sudden tenderness of Miss Evelyn. Her cajoling conversation with me. The Inheritance. The Absolution.

I was now nineteen years of age. It was a very long time since I had received any news of my mother, or my stepfather. Were they still living ?... To be quite frank, I did not trouble myself much about them. Moreover the incessant whippings which fell to my lot annihilated every other thought in me of the world outside the school.

But one day Miss Evelyn summoned me to her room.

I went, very frightened, as usual, expecting to be beaten or humiliated in some way or other. Imagine my astonishment when I found most her smiling her gracious smile.

"Dear Françoise", she said to me, "sit down here beside me, your dear friend !"

She drew me down on to the sofa beside her, kissing me tenderly But I was not to be taken in. Such a welcome could augur no good to me, for I was accustomed to the hypocrisy of these ladies !

"Let me see", continued Miss Evelyn", "how long ago is it since you were whipped last ?"

Blushing deeply, I replied :

" I was whipped last evening, Miss Evelyn".

"Ah ! Ah !" she exclaimed. laughing. "Well, my dear child, I am very pleased to inform you that last night you were whipped for the last time, — at least, at Birch Villa !"

Terrified, I asked myself what supremely subtle design she was meditating. Then, suddenly, I thought that I had discovered it.

"I am going to leave Birch Villa, Miss Evelyn ?"

Her smile became more and more cajoling.

"There is no question of that, for the time being, darling ! But I certainly think that my little Françoise is now an accomplished young lady ; and from henceforth I wish her charming little posterior to be respected !... She is no longer my pupil ! I wish to make of her my friend... And even more than that, if she consents... Does she ?"

At first I stood dumbfounded. Then, this wonderfut change in Miss Evelyn's attitude to me filled me with so much joy that I could not lon-

ger contain myself. I fell upon her neck, and embraced her with all my heart.

" I wish whatever you do", I said to her. Then I added :

"But... Miss Mabel... She won't whip me any more, either ?"

Then I added :

"But... Miss Mabel... She won't whip me any more, either ?"

"No, you dear little thing ! No, she won't whip you any more. In fact it was she who proposed that, from this day onwards, we should open our hearts to you, and our arms.., I will ring for her, and she will tell you so herself !... "

Miss Mabel came at once, and took me in her arms. I returned her kisses with tears of joy. I was happy. And the great passion which I had felt from the very beginning for the mistress who had so often and so cruelly beaten me, returned in full force.

"The dream of my life, dear Françoise", went on Miss Evelyn, "was to raise you from pupil to the rank of mistress. How happy the three of us would be together !"

I flushed violently... I had at once pictured myself, in a short, swift vision, whipping scarlet posteriors, brandishing long switches, and scolded as I had been scolded...

My two friends waited anxiously for my reply.

I sank into Miss Evelyn's arms, murmuring:

"I should love it!"

At that there was an explosion of joy such as seemed to me, then, to be quite natural. Miss Evelyn and Miss Mabel could not leave off kissing me.

"Then", said Miss Evelyn, "we will start preparing the exams. And in two months' time the thing will be an accomplished fact".

And we started our work at once.

This lasted for a fortnight. At the end of that time, we received the visit of a stout gentleman in gold spectacles, who had a long conference with Miss Neakes. When it was over, she came to find me, her eyes red with weeping.

"Dearest', she said", I have some very sad news for you. Your parents...'.

"Dead!"

She remained silent... And I burst into tears. In spite of the wrong she had done me, I loved my poor mother. After all, she had only been a weak woman imposed upon by a man...

Then Miss Evelyn, as I lay in her arms, told me that my mother and my stepfather, while on their way to America, had been drowned in a collision at sea, and the liner had sunk, they going down with it... At this juncture, the gentleman advanced towards us; and Miss Evelyn introduced him as the solicitor who was charged to administer the estate.

"As I informed you in my telegram, a fortnight ago", he said, "you are the sole inheritrix, an I have come to place myself at your disposition, should you desire te return to London and take up your residence in your house, where you are expec ted".

I looked at Miss Evelyn, who was, for once, very red and confused, and ill at ease. She had hidden the telegram from me; and that had been the secret of her sudden tenderness, and her resolution to whip me no more! My large fortune would serve her interests admirably; and she hoped that my tastes would induce me to stay with her... Well, I was so happy to feel that I was free,— free at last! — that I could not bear her any malice. I approached her, and kissed her tenderly.

"Dear Miss Evelyn", I said, in a low voice, "I wish you to know, once and tor all, that I have forgotten your past severity, and Miss Mabel s, also. And, if you wish it, I will remain your friend. I will come back every year to see you. Do you agree ?"

She embraced me tenderly, relieved and delighted; and so did Miss Mabel, who had just then arrived upon the scene. Both of them thanked me, and made me promise to return.

I kept my promise for several years. Then Miss Mabel married the Reverent Stephen Grant; and Miss Evelyn Neakes, following her example,

married Doctor Sharp. Both of them founded, for their own personal distraction, a Charity School, where I doubt not that they have their active hands very full ! And to this house, in memory of the first one, which is now my property, and where I sometimes go to renew my memories, they have given the name of Birch Villa.

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